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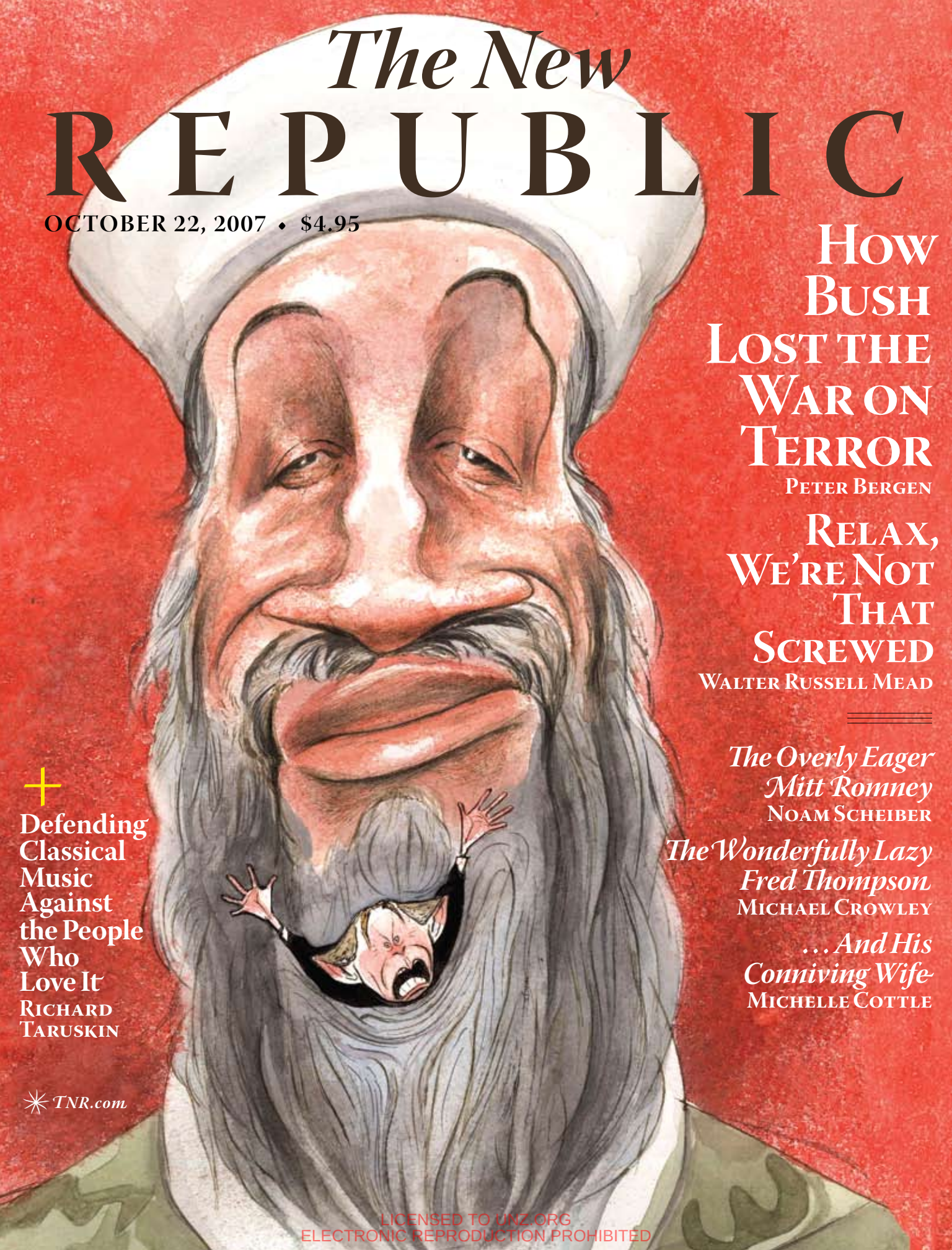

How Bush Lost the War on Terror
Peter Bergen

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Walter Russell Mead

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

VOLUME 237 WASHINGTON, OCTOBER 22, 2007 NUMBER 4,823

Gold Meddle

You probably haven't heard of Yang Chunlin, and, until recently, neither had we. Yang is a 52-year-old Chinese land-rights activist who put together a petition questioning his country's decision to host the Olympics next year. In the United States—as in Italy, Greece, or any of the other countries that have recently hosted the Olympics—if you circulate a petition criticizing the government, any number of things can happen. In the worst-case scenario, you get ignored. In the best-case scenario, you get attention and, eventually, your way. In China, you get chained to the corners of a prison bed for days in a manner that stretches your arms and legs—and causes considerable pain. According to a group called China Human Rights Defenders, "The victim has to eat, drink and defecate in the same position." You are required to clean up the excrement produced by other inmates. You are denied access to a lawyer. You are charged with the ominous-sounding crime of subverting state power.

That, at least, is what happened to Yang after he was detained in July, as reported by the Associated Press. We are relaying his story now because, with less than a year to go before the start of the Beijing Olympics, some in Washington are suddenly asking: Can we really send our athletes to compete in a country that tortures its own citizens merely for expressing political thoughts? That has enabled the Darfur genocide by supplying weapons to Sudan? That, most recently, chose to stand by and watch—you might even say wink—as its sadistic allies in the Burmese military slaughtered protesters in the streets of Rangoon? In August, one congressman introduced a resolution calling on the United States to boycott the 2008 Olympics. And, in the wake of last month's carnage, Fred Hiatt of *The Washington Post* suggested delivering the following pointed message to Beijing: "Tell China that, as far as the United States is concerned, it can have its Olympic Games or it can have its regime in Burma. It can't have both."

The problem with these proposals is that they probably won't do much good. America's boycott of the 1980 games in Moscow—protesting the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—accomplished nothing geopolitically and served only to deny U.S. athletes a shot at Olympic gold. It is far from clear that a boycott would yield better results now. And, even if it would, it isn't going to happen. The Olympics are a far bigger deal today than they were in 1980. With vast sums of money in sponsorships and TV rights at stake, with so many Americans planning to tune in, and with President Bush having promised to attend, the political will for a boycott simply doesn't exist.

And so we have a different idea—one that hinges on the American athletes who will compete next year in Beijing. Put simply, we think they should pull a Lee Bollinger—or, rather, a Lee Bollinger in reverse: Whereas the president of Columbia was spectacularly rude to his guest, we hope they will be spectacularly rude to their host.

These Olympics afford our athletes an opportunity that citizens of the free world rarely get: to travel to a country where speech is tightly regulated and to speak—without fear of retribution and from a significant public platform—about the injustices that country inflicts on its own citizens, as well as others. The 2008 games will provide no shortage of chances to do this. In 2006, speed skater Joey Cheek spoke about Darfur after winning his gold medal in Turin. If an athlete expressed similar sentiments to a pack of journalists next year, while adding some observations on how Beijing has facilitated the genocide, he or she would instantly command the world's attention. Similarly, a press conference called by multiple American athletes in a prominent Beijing location to discuss Chinese support for the junta in Burma would not go unnoticed. Nor would an open letter by U.S. athletes to China's leaders demanding the release of specific political prisoners—delivered in person to a top official at the games.

Of course, China tightly controls domestic media, which means these displays would not necessarily reach average citizens. But there are ways around this problem. Chinese-language banners unfurled by athletes at the opening ceremonies that call for the government to permit free speech, T-shirts slipped on during medal ceremonies that carry messages of solidarity with Chinese dissidents—these gestures could reach tens of thousands of spectators and, through word of mouth, many more. And, even if such images are seen only by a tiny fraction of China's population, they will invariably be viewed by millions around the world—perhaps becoming iconic symbols of resistance, like the famous shot of black athletes with their fists raised at the 1968 Olympics. This would itself be valuable. The men who rule China are brutal, but they are also insecure; and they value these Olympics mainly as a

Alex Nabaum

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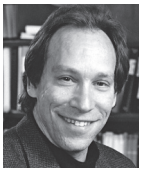
Does the Universe have a Purpose?

Unlikely.

Perhaps you hoped for a stronger statement, one way or the other. But as a scientist I don't believe I can make one. While nothing in biology, chemistry, physics, geology, astronomy, or cosmology has ever provided direct evidence of purpose in nature, science can never unambiguously prove that there is no such purpose. As Carl Sagan said, in another context: Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.

Of course, nothing would stop science from uncovering positive evidence of divine guidance and purpose if it were attainable. For example, tomorrow night if we look up at the stars and they have been rearranged into a pattern that reads, "I am here," I think even the most hard-nosed scientific skeptic would suspect something was up.

But no such unambiguous signs have been uncovered among the millions and millions of pieces of data we have gleaned about the natural world over centuries of exploration. And this is precisely



why a scientist can conclude that it is very unlikely that there is any divine purpose. If a creator had such a purpose, she could choose to demonstrate it a little more clearly to the inhabitants of her creation.

One is always free, as some people do, to interpret the laws of nature as signs of purpose, as for example Pope Pius did when Belgian physicist-priest George Lemaitre demonstrated that Einstein's general theory of relativity implied the universe had a beginning. The Pope interpreted this as scientific proof of Genesis, but Lemaitre asked him to stop saying this. The big bang, as it has become known, can be interpreted in terms of a divine beginning, but it can equally be interpreted as removing God from the equation entirely. The conclusion is in the mind of the beholder, and it is outside of the realm of scientific theory and prediction…

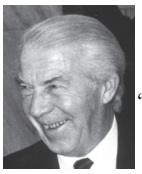
CONTINUED ONLINE.

Lawrence M. Krauss is a professor of physics and astronomy at Case Western Reserve University and the director of the Center for Education and Research in Cosmology and Astrophysics.

No.

I should mention first that this is a loaded question, with several hidden implications. A "purpose" presupposes a mind that conceived it, as well as the ability to implement it. In the present case, this means that the owner of the mind not only created the universe the way it is, but could have created another universe and decided to create the existing one for a specific reason. So the question really deals with the belief in a Creator who enjoys almost infinite power and freedom but, at the same time, goes through the very human process of pondering decisions and acting accordingly. In a way, this is a very anthropomorphic vision of God.

A second aspect of the question concerns the motivation behind the purpose. What did God have in mind in creating the universe the way it is? Being the ones who ask the question, it is obvious that we see ourselves as at least part of



God's goal. As pointed out by the defenders of the "anthropic principle," what is peculiar about the universe is that it happens to have just the right physical properties to give rise to life and, through life, to human minds. Such an anthropocentric view of the creation is, however, not readily reconciled with what is known of the evolutionary origin of humankind...

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Christian de Duve is a biochemist. He was the recipient of the 1974 Nobel Prize in Physiology and Medicine.

Yes.

Consider this question: Do the Earth and mankind have a purpose? If so, then the universe does too, ipso facto. If not, the universe might still have (some other) purpose; but I don't have to face that contingency, because I believe we do have one…

Namely, to defeat and rise above our animal natures; to create goodness, beauty, and holiness where only physics and animal life once existed; to create what might be (if we succeed) the only tiny pinprick of goodness in the universe—which is otherwise (so far as we know) morally null and void. If no other such project exists anywhere in the cosmos, our victory would change the nature of the universe. If there are similar projects elsewhere, more power to them; but our own task remains unchanged.

But why rise above and not blend into nature? Equivalently, from a Western viewpoint: why did the Judeo-Christian tradition replace the pagan idea of gods made in man's image with a revolutionary inversion, man made in God's? Why should we be goaded not to be ourselves but to be better than ourselves?

Why seek goodness?

Because most humans desire goodness. For most (not all!) humans, this urge is easily ignored in the short term, but nearly impossible to uproot over the long haul.

Males (and females) desire sex, too; but if a male had somehow grown up without seeing a woman, this desire would (probably) remain vague and unformed. Humans desire goodness; but until the Judeo-Christian revelation this desire was, at least for Western humanity, vague and unformed…

CONTINUED ONLINE.

David Gelernter is a professor of computer science at Yale University and a national fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

Not Sure.

Anyone who expresses a more definitive response to the question is claiming access to knowledge not based on empirical foundations. This remarkably persistent way of thinking, common to most religions and some branches of philosophy, has failed badly in past efforts to understand, and thereby predict the operations of the universe and our place within it.

To read these essays in their entirety, and to learn more about the authors, visit www.templeton.org/purpose

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To assert that the universe has a purpose implies the universe has intent. And intent implies a desired outcome. But who would do the desiring? And what would a desired outcome be? That carbon-based life is inevitable? Or that sentient primates are life's neurological pinnacle? Are answers to these questions even possible without expressing a profound bias of human sentiment? Of course humans were not around to ask these questions for 99.9999% of cosmic history. So if the purpose of the universe was to create humans then the cosmos was embarrassingly inefficient about it…

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Neil deGrasse Tyson is an astrophysicist and the director of New York City's Hayden Planetarium.

Certainly.

But first let me explain. A common scientific view is that evolution occurs simply because matter

obeys some unseen law whereby a simple organism will, if it evolves at all, become a more complex one. Evolution is thus a blind process without purpose and science will one day uncover the simple mechanical rules underlying every seeming mystery. Our own lives, therefore, are equally without purpose. There is no place here for the spirit, the immortal soul.

Many people find this hard or impossible to accept. Even that great scientist Albert Einstein sustained a mystical outlook on life that was, he said, constantly renewed from the wonder and humility that filled him when he gazed at the stars. I wonder, can our finite minds ever truly understand such things as eternity and infinity? My own thinking requires a beginning and an ending, an alpha and omega. "In the beginning was the Word," says the Bible. Yes, of course–the big bang. But it is impossible to imagine "nothingness" before that cosmic eruption…

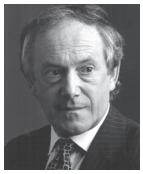
CONTINUED ONLINE.

Jane Goodall is the founder of the Jane Goodall Institute and a UN Messenger of Peace.

No.

In the absence of evidence, the only reason to suppose that it does is sentimental wishful thinking and sentimental wishful thinking, which underlies all religion, is an unreliable tool for the discovery of truth of any kind.

The extension of analogies is another tool that accompanies wishful thinking in the toolboxes of the credulous. That an intricate mechanism, such as an engine or even a spoon, is commonly associated with a purpose cannot be taken to be evidence that the universe as a whole is associated with a purpose, any more than the existence of a cheetah implies that it has been designed with a purpose in mind. Cheetahs have evolved by the bloody, directionless, unguided processes of evolution: they have not been provided for the purpose of killing antelopes. Similarly, the universe has evolved over its 14 billion years of current existence by the directionless, unguided processes that are manifestations of the working out of physical laws: it has not been made for the purpose



of providing platforms to enable cheetahs to stalk their prey or humans to generate great art or to entertain delusions. That we do not yet understand anything about the inception of the universe should not mean that we need to ascribe to its inception a supernatural cause, a creator, and therefore to associate with that creator's inscrutable mind a purpose, whether it be divine, malign, or even whimsically capricious.

Theologians typically focus on questions that they have invented for their own puzzlement. Some theologians are perplexed by the nature of life after death, a notion they have invented without a scrap of evidence…

CONTINUED ONLINE.

Peter Atkins is a fellow and professor of chemistry at Lincoln College, Oxford.

I Hope So.

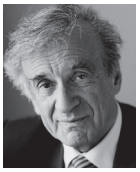
And if it doesn't, it's up to us to give it one. But first, let us consider these questions: Why the world? Why people? Why did God consider it useful or even good to introduce them into his universal plan?

If we are to believe an old Talmudic legend, these questions are as old as Creation, and perhaps even older. The angels did in fact try to dissuade him. "What good will they be?" asked the Angel of Truth. "People will be unable to keep from lying." The Angel of Peace added, "People will never be able to live in peace without quarreling amongst each other." And so why not simply give up?

Was God wrong not to listen to his celestial counselors' wise warnings? History's answer seems depressing. It didn't take long for Adam and Eve, in paradise, to disobey divine will. These pitiful parents left their two sons to argue; one became the assassin, the second the victim of the other. Death thereby made its debut into human memory in the form of murder.

Incapable of living in society, people irritated God so much that he ended up lamenting the confidence he had placed in them. Hence the devastating flood. Was it his mistake to start over again?

Confronted by their creator, are people condemned to remain God's adversary, or even his enemy? Perhaps his prisoner? His orphan? The Jewish tradition in which I base my thoughts defines it unambiguously—we are his partner. To put it plainly: Though God created the world, it is up to people to preserve, respect, enrich, embellish, and populate it, without bringing violence to it…



CONTINUED ONLINE.

Elie Wiesel is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities and University Professor at Boston University. This essay was translated from French by Jamie Moore.

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chance to cement their status as respectable members of the world community. If, rather than a point of pride, the Beijing games become a point of controversy or debate or even shame, it could provoke these autocrats to rethink their behavior.

We realize our suggestions are, at some level, presumptuous. We do not know whether American athletes care about Darfur or Burma or freedom of speech in China. But that is why we are proposing this idea now. Over the next ten months, we hope our athletes will weigh the issues involved. And we hope that at least some will come to the same conclusion we have: that these are questions on which good people cannot remain silent.

We also know that athletes are not politicians. But, by awarding the games to China, the International Olympic Committee has already made them political actors. If they speak up next year in Beijing, they will be making a political statement; but, if they stay quiet, they will be participating in an event that helps legitimize a brutal government. Only they can decide what to do. We hope they remember Yang Chunlin as they choose.

Bill of Goods

It may be hokey, and it's certainly naïve, but there's still something wonderful about the truism that anyone born in the United States can grow up to be president. Which is why you'll seldom see this magazine fault the men and women who run for president without a prayer in the world of winning. Whether it's Morry "The Grizz" Taylor, the tire magnate who ran in 1996; or Jeff Costa, who donned a crustacean suit and campaigned as Lobsterman in 2000; or any of the other hopeless long-shot presidential candidates who come along every four years—The New Republic salutes you!

But we are unable to muster that sentiment for Bill Richardson—at least, not at this point. To be sure, Richardson has a more realistic shot at the White House than The Grizz or Lobsterman ever did. His impressive record of public service includes more than 14 years in Congress, stints as U.N. ambassador and energy secretary in the Clinton administration, and two terms as New Mexico's governor. Richardson is also the first serious Hispanic candidate for the White House. But, in spite of these qualifications—which have been overshadowed by his numerous gaffes on the trail (see "Paper Candidate," June 18)—Richardson's presidential campaign has failed to take off. He's mired in the single digits in the polls, and—barring the simultaneous collapse of Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John Edwards—it's hard to see how he'll capture the Democratic nomination. (And even then he'd have to duke it out with Dennis Kucinich, Joe Biden, and Chris Dodd.) Put a fork in Richardson '08; it's done.

Except it's not. There's one campaign Richardson has a good shot of winning in 2008: the race for New Mexico's U.S. Senate seat that Republican Pete Domenici will vacate after six terms. Richardson was elected to his second gubernatorial term in 2006 with a whopping 69 percent of the vote; and his approval rating in New Mexico—in contrast to his approval rating in, say, Iowa—remains high. A recent poll showed Richardson as the only Democrat who could top 60 percent in a Senate race against likely GOP candidates. It's little wonder then that, when Domenici announced his retirement last week, Democrats in New Mexico and in Washington began beseeching Richardson to abandon his presidential campaign and run for the Senate instead.

Alas, Richardson has rebuffed these requests. As he told ABC News's George Stephanopoulos this week, "I'm running for president. And I'm going to be the nominee. I'm not running for Senate." Asked by Stephanopoulos if he might change his mind before the February 8 filing deadline for the Senate race, Richardson replied: "I'm not going to reconsider. By … February 8, I will have won the California and New Mexico and Arizona primaries. I will be on my way." On his way back to Albuquerque to serve out the last two years of his second gubernatorial term, we'd argue, but why quibble?

Richardson, of course, has the right to nurse his hopeless presidential ambitions until his fellow Democrats unmercifully crush them in the actual caucuses and primaries. But, if Richardson truly cared about his party—not to mention his country—he would give up that right, abandon his presidential campaign, and toss his hat in the ring for the U.S. Senate. After all, while Richardson won't be in the White House come 2009, there's a good chance that another Democrat will be. And that president will need all the help she—or he—can get. ◆

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Contents

October 22, 2007

The Editors	**1**	**GOLD MEDDLE** *How synchronized swimmers can spread democracy.*
		TRB
Jonathan Chait	**7**	**FEAR FACTOR** *Entitlement hysteria grips the capital.*
		THE MALL
Noam Scheiber	**9**	*Romney tries to become a regular person.*
Joshua Kurlantzick	**12**	*Burma's wicked apologists.*
Eve Fairbanks	**13**	*The K Street hot dog in the age of reform.*
Michael Kinsley	**15**	*Receiving psychotic dictators: an etiquette guide.*
Michael Crowley	**16**	*In praise of Fred Thompson's laziness.*
		FEATURES
Michelle Cottle	**18**	**JERI RIGGED** *The machinations of Mrs. Fred Thompson.*
Peter Bergen	**23**	**WAR OF ERROR** *How Osama bin Laden beat George W. Bush.*
Walter Russell Mead	**28**	**FAILING UPWARD** *Relax, America will survive even this president.*
		BOOKS AND THE ARTS
Stanley Kauffmann	**33**	**FILMS DESIRE AND DECEIT** *Ang Lee's amazing range; Kenneth Branagh's nimble theatrics.*
Richard Taruskin	**34**	**BOOKS THE MUSICAL MYSTIQUE** *For years now, classical music has been said to be in crisis, or even on the verge of extinction. Audiences are dwindling; classical radio stations and record stores are vanishing; even Joshua Bell, performing in a subway station, can drum up little interest. But a dire situation is being made even more dire by the sentimentality and unreality of some of the music's most ardent defenders. With friends like these . . .*
István Deák	**45**	**BOOKS THE DECIDERS** ***Fateful Choices: Ten Decisions That Changed the World, 1940–1941*** *by Ian Kershaw*
Stephen Owen	**49**	**BOOKS THE THEATER OF HISTORY** ***Return to Dragon Mountain: Memories of a Late Ming Man*** *by Jonathan D. Spence*
David Baker	**50**	**POEM LITTLE ORCHARD**
David A. Bell	**52**	**BOOKS UTOPIA AND CALCULATION** ***The Demands of Liberty: Civil Society in France Since the Revolution*** *by Pierre Rosanvallon, translated by Arthur Goldhammer*
		ARUSHA DIARIST
Margo Howard	**56**	**AFRICAN QUEEN**

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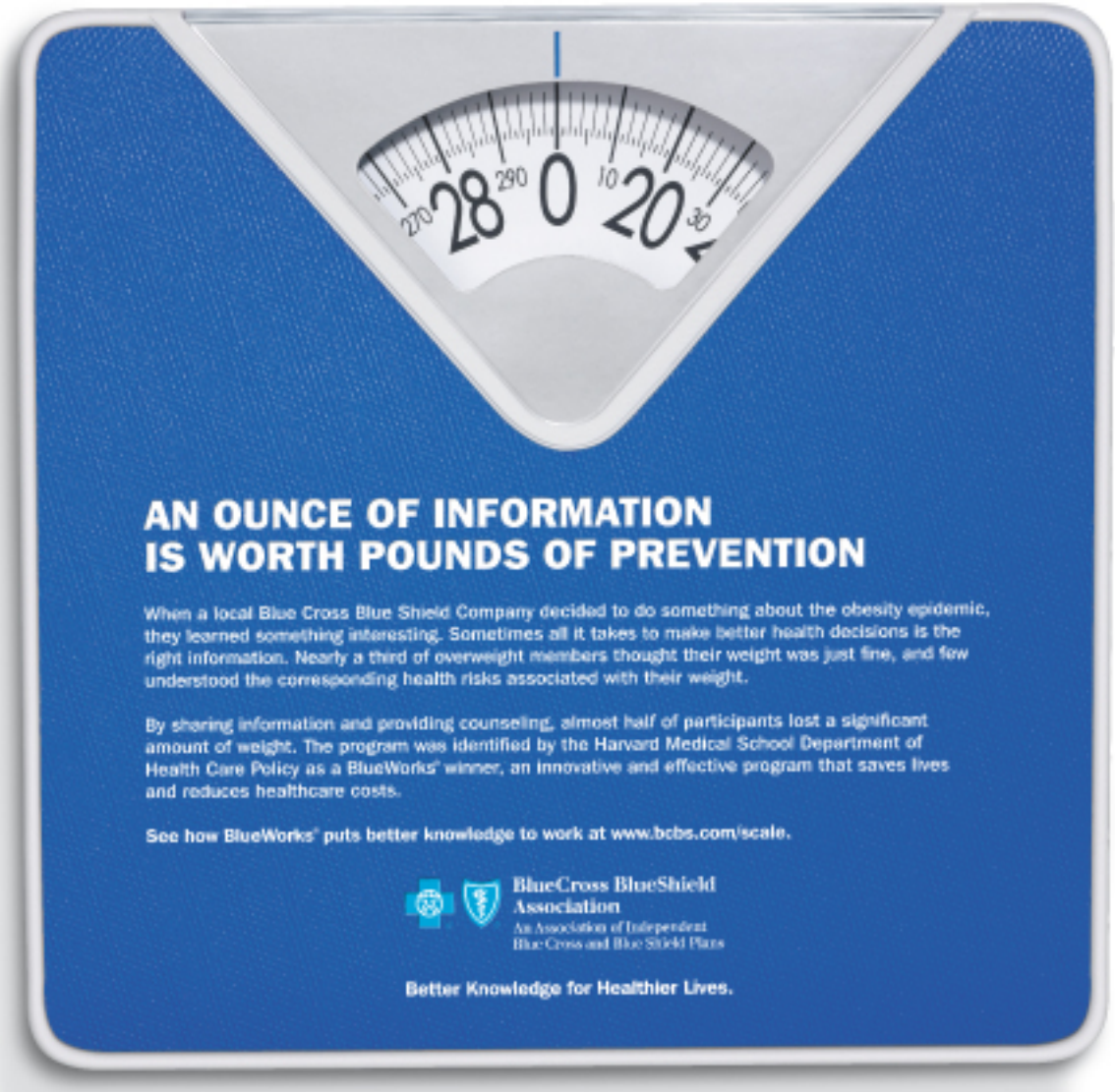

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Fear Factor

Entitlement hysteria grips the capital.

JONATHAN CHAIT

THE BEGINNING of the fall season brought to Washington another periodic upsurge of entitlement hysteria. Newcomers were alarmed, but those of us who have witnessed the spectacle were able to take it in with some patience. Entitlement hysteria pops up all at once, sometimes prompted by a discrete stimulus, such as a report of the Social Security Trustees, but other times seemingly at random. Affected parties tend to furrow their brows and scold politicians in particular, and Americans in general, for our myopia in the face of the demographic tidal wave of retiring baby boomers who will drown the federal budget with unsustainable benefits.

It is unclear exactly what brought the latest episode upon us. A few weeks ago, Fred Thompson began winning plaudits for his gravelly voiced warnings about the entitlement menace. "No politician wants to face up to it," he warned. Soon, NBC's Tim Russert was subjecting the Democratic presidential field to a series of glowering demands that they produce a solution to the entitlement crisis. A *Washington Post* editorial flayed Hillary Clinton's lack of specifics on the issue as an "irresponsible dodge."

Those afflicted with entitlement hysteria are identifiable not by the realization that big social programs will need a fix—which is widely understood—but by the urgency and gravity of their pleas. Entitlement hysterics' favorite statistic is the retiree-worker ratio. In 1950, they will explain in somber tones, there were 18 workers for every retiree. But, by 2030, there will be barely more than two. Absent reform, they warn, we will all be wage slaves, toiling away as our languid baby-boom masters while away their declining years on cruise ships and RVs.

There's some truth to their analysis, but it misses the point in a crucial way. The two largest entitlement programs, Social Security and Medicare, are in very different shape. The Social Security Trust Fund is scheduled to last until 2042, at which point we'll have to hike up taxes or trim spending a bit. Medicare, on the other hand, faces a day of reckoning in 2019.

TRB
From Washington

Yet one of the oddities of the entitlement hysterics is that they are far more obsessed with the minor problems of Social Security than with the massive problems of Medicare. Indeed, if you look closely at their dire proclamations, they inevitably follow the same pattern: They begin with an ominous summation about entitlements—thus lumping together Medicare with Social Security—then swiftly proceed to demand that Social Security be shored up forthwith.

Russert's recent harangue at the Democratic presidential debate was a classic example. He began by warning of the crisis faced by "Social Security and Medicare" but proceeded to ask no fewer than 14 questions about Social Security, and zero about Medicare. It's as if he began fulminating against crime in the greater New York area and then immediately began demanding a large new police deployment in Chappaqua.

Should they stop being hysterical about Social Security and start being hysterical about Medicare? Well, that would be a start, but it would still elide the deeper problem. The reason Medicare is in such worse shape than Social Security is that it has to account for exploding health care costs. Their focus on demographics and greedy baby boomers is entirely misplaced. Indeed, the "entitlement problem" is mostly—three-quarters, to be precise—a function of rising health care costs.

Since you can't solve the entitlement problem without solving the health care problem, one might think that the entitlement hysterics would have gradually moved on to becoming health care hysterics. (There's also the fact that Social Security is solvent until 2041, but over 40 million Americans lack health insurance *right now*.) Yet this is another puzzling thing about entitlement hysteria: the sheer persistence of the obsession. It's true we have some large federal programs that are going to have to be shored up. But why do they consider *this* to be a matter of such unique urgency? Put aside the war in Iraq, for which plenty of people (including me) lack any confident solution. In addition to the health care crisis, there's global warming. There are numerous loosely secured nuclear sites throughout the world, any one of which could some day provide the raw material for a terrorist attack of unprecedented scale. There are numerous diseases threatening the lives of millions of Africans whose deaths could be prevented at relatively modest expense.

These other calamities have one thing in common: The consequences of inaction are permanent. Carbon released into the atmosphere can never be recovered. Africans who die from AIDS can't be brought back to life. And fissile material captured by terrorists can't very easily be taken back.

Compared to such disasters, the entitlement nightmare scenario isn't so nightmarish. If we do absolutely nothing to fix Social Security, then, 35 years from now, the program will have to start paying out three-quarters benefits, or we'll have to raise taxes. It's not ideal, but it doesn't keep me awake at night.

Yes, the fix would be easier and fairer if we implemented it sooner. But the closer we get to Social Security's insolvency date, the easier it will become politically to do the fix. The last major fix to Social Security, implemented in 1983, came about just as the Trust Fund was on the verge of insolvency. The economist Herb Stein once noted that any trend that can't go on, won't. Social Security's future shortfalls would seem to be the perfect example of such a trend, and thus the perfect example of a problem that will solve itself in time.

Ten or 20 years ago, you could plausibly deem Social Security's finances among the most pressing national problems. Those who were willing to take on the problem were admired for their farsightedness, bipartisanship, and seriousness of purpose. Social Security's place on our list of national problems has long since been overtaken, but, among Washington establishment types who remember those days, the issue retains its totemic significance. Entitlement hysteria has become less a response to a crisis than an expression of statesmanship.

Four days after his debate inquisition, Russert boasted to an NBC colleague on air, "I tried to get these candidates to take positions on Iraq, on Social Security, on the big issues." They didn't, of course. But noble failure in the face of complacency and cowardice is the entitlement hysteric's perpetual burden. ◆

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The Mall

Mitt-a-Morphosis

Romney tries to become a regular person.

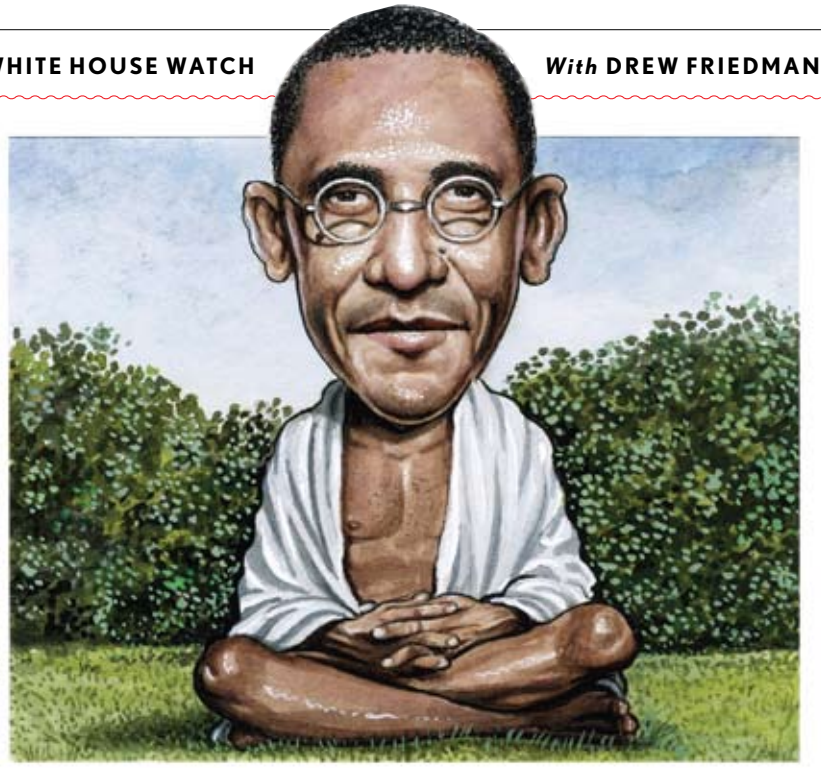
The thought that comes to mind at my first Mitt Romney event in Manchester, New Hampshire, has nothing to do with politics or, for that matter, Mitt Romney. It has to do with a company called Ameriprise Financial. Pretty much the only thing I know about Ameriprise is that its corporate spokesperson is Dennis Hopper, of *Easy Rider* fame. Every now and then I catch Hopper's mug on television, whereupon he exhorts aging baby boomers to rebel against—well, against what it's not entirely clear—by having Ameriprise plan their retirements. It's a completely preposterous pitch: Is there anything less rebellious than forecasting your monthly spending needs into your eighties? Still, if I were an aging baby boomer, I'd probably sign up with Ameriprise. I'd appreciate the appeal to my self-image.

A Romney town-hall event is, in its own way, a lot like an Ameriprise commercial. Romney's press schedule announces the chance to "Ask Mitt Anything," and there are big ASK MITT ANYTHING signs flanking the candidate when he speaks. There is something completely preposterous about this, too: If you spend a day going to various "Ask Mitt Anything" events, you quickly realize that, while you can ask Mitt anything, Mitt pretty much gives the same eight or ten answers over and over again. But here's the thing: If I were a New Hampshire voter—that famously tough-minded species—I'd probably go for it. This guy gets me, I'd think. At least in the way a savvy corporation understands its customers.

If the nomination went to the candidate most at home delivering PowerPoint presentations, Romney would almost certainly win it. His monologues overflow with facts and statistics. But they're so exquisitely organized, they build so efficiently to their punchlines, you almost forget they require meticulous preparation. The only time this occurred to me was at another "Ask Mitt Anything," when Romney fielded a question about tort reform. "Last year, America's corporations—no, I've got to step back, I need to give you more ground work," he said, briefly exposing some mental circuitry. He continued: "The only way a nation like ours can stay ahead of China forever … is by having better innovation and technology. … This statistic should alarm you: Last year, American corporations spent more money fighting tort claims, paying off tort claims, than they spent on research and development." This, like all of Romney's answers, was punctuated by an abrupt, "Thank you." On to the next slide.

Romney's analytical style is hands-down his most compelling attribute. It's what made him successful as a management consultant and private-equity-fund manager. And it's what most distinguishes him from the man he'd like to succeed (though both hold MBAs from Harvard). But management consulting isn't the most obvious preparation for life on the campaign trail. Later, we show up at a diner in Derry where Rudy Giuliani stopped the day before. Romney can look less like a flesh-pressing candidate in these situations than like a video of a candidate that's being fast-forwarded. At one point, a hunter in an orange baseball cap asks about global warming. Romney doesn't so much answer the question as strafe him with bullet points: Nuclear power–clean coal–efficient vehicles–liquefied coal–solar–wind–ethanol–biodiesel. Romney is talking even faster now than during the Q&A setting, as if to compensate for the relative inefficiency of one-on-one campaigning.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH *With* **DREW FRIEDMAN**



In his contest with Hillary Clinton, Obama assumes a strategy of nonresistance.

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Mitt Romney campaigning in Hollis, New Hampshire.

On the way out, Romney sees the hunter again. "What were you hunting with today, a 20-gauge?" he asks. "No, I had a brand new, over-and-under 12-gauge," says the hunter. This is another Romney tic. When forced to make small talk, his habit is to guess at some trivial detail. It's of a piece with his general appetite for data. The problem is that it's constantly setting him up to be wrong, whereas Romney is a man who likes to be right. Later on, at a farm store, Romney asks the owner, "You've got about five thousand [square] feet here?" (right answer: 4,000) and whether an employee is her daughter (nope). At our final stop in Derry, Romney spots a man wearing a foreign-looking soccer jersey. "That's a Reebok shirt, isn't it?" "I don't know," says the man. Suddenly, Romney comes about as close to losing his cool as I've seen all day: "It *is*. It says Reebok right there." He's practically pleading as he points to the man's back: "You have a Reebok insignia right here."

Romney is fond of casting himself as the underdog. With Giuliani effectively skipping Iowa and Romney banking on victories there and in New Hampshire to propel him to the nomination, the latter has taken on heightened importance. Polls show Romney as the frontrunner in both states, but his lead over Giuliani here is rapidly diminishing. The press hounds him about this all day. Romney's response is to marvel at how a guy like him, who began the race in the single digits, could now be leading in several states. It's the kind of spin all candidates engage in, but Romney says it so earnestly you'd think he'd arrived on the campaign trail penniless from Guatemala, not as a former governor with a huge personal fortune.

Even if it's true that Romney has overcome some serious hurdles—his lack of national name-recognition, for one—his chiseled features and immaculate tailoring belie his underdog claim. He looks like the opposite of an underdog—an overdog. Romney inadvertently reinforces this impression from time to time. A man tells Romney his daughter attends Michigan State. "My brother is on the board of Michigan State!" Romney gushes. Later, at a bakery up the street, Romney recalls a similar bakery from his youth "not far from my parents' summer home."

The central irony of the Romney campaign is this: Everything Romney has achieved in life, he's achieved thanks to his relentless empiricism and analytical rigor—in a word, his rationality. As a young consultant assigned to Monsanto, Romney learned so much about the firm's operations that its executives assumed he had an engineering degree. (He didn't.) When Romney took over as CEO of Bain & Company in 1990, the consulting firm was in such lousy shape it could barely make payroll. Romney put Bain on sound footing by rescheduling its debts and renegotiating its contracts with vendors.

Accomplishments like this make Romney pretty close to an ideal Republican candidate, especially after the highly unempirical Bush era. And yet, it turns out that something as seemingly irrelevant as his religion inspires irrational fear and loathing among the people who will anoint the GOP nominee, particularly in the South. Life has taught Romney there's no such thing as a problem that defies logic, at least not if you think about it hard enough. But here's one that does. Worse, it's entirely arbitrary. It's not Romney's fault he was born into the Mormon faith. Nor is it his fault that, over the last generation, conservative voters have come to see religion as a proxy for moral character. The whole thing must be maddening.

The last event of the day is yet another "Ask Mitt Anything," this time at a church in Merrimack. Midway through the Q&A, a hard-looking man named Ron gets up and says, ominously, that he has a comment and a question. The comment comes first: "I'm sick and tired of hearing from the left-wing media" about how the governor's religion disqualifies him from the presidency. The crowd breaks into heavy applause before Ron can even finish, and Romney looks relieved. Something I hadn't realized before this moment suddenly occurs to me: Romney's Mormonism may, in a perverse way, help him in a place like New Hampshire. Without it, he's just another well-spoken preppy with a square jaw. With it, he becomes instantly sympathetic, someone you can relate to—the victim of circumstances beyond his control. Everything about Romney may scream "overdog." But, at this moment, he is the opposite.

Noam Scheiber

REUTERS/BRIAN SNYDER/NEWSCOM; ANTHONY RUSSO

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Rangoon Squad

Burma's wicked apologists.

Having traveled through countries suffering under harsh authoritarian regimes, I wasn't surprised by much on my first trip to Burma, roughly ten years ago. There were the requisite thuggish military men in reflective shades patrolling the airports, the giant signs warning people to CRUSH ALL INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DESTRUCTIVE ELEMENTS. But the booksellers of Rangoon took me aback. The main roads of Burma's largest city are lined with bookstalls hawking tattered versions of British novels, ancient copies of *National Geographic*, and dog-eared reprints of political philosophy texts. Over many subsequent visits to Burma, I began to see the booksellers as emblematic of a deep-seated national hunger for education and dialogue, for contact with the outside world, and for a voice in the debate about the country's future.

There are those who would have you believe that this hunger is unimportant, or that it doesn't exist. Even after the recent protests in Burma—including one where thousands of monks chanted "Democracy! Democracy!"—a group of influential Burma experts maintain the idea, dating back to the last major Burmese uprising (brutally crushed in 1988), that the country simply doesn't contain the ingredients for a functional democracy and won't for years to come.

This argument is nefarious. It justifies the junta's policies, it forestalls democracy, and it encourages Burma's neighbors to ignore the Burmese reformers. It is also wrong.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, as poor countries from Malawi to Indonesia embraced democracy, Burma began increasingly to look like an outlier, and Burma watchers developed an argument to explain why. The argument goes like this: First, Burma is too ethnically splintered to come together effectively as a democratic nation. Burma is home to some 130 ethnicities, a diversity that the British colonial government used to its advantage, playing different groups off one another to weaken the country's resistance. Some of these groups have been at war with the central government since the end of colonial rule. As Burmese historian and former U.N. official Thant Myint-U, a leading exponent of the Burma exception argument, wrote earlier this year in the *London Review of Books*, "We tend to see Burma as a Velvet Revolution gone wrong, when in fact it is an impoverished war-torn society … with armed forces of more than 400,000 men (and over a dozen insurgent armies) who know only the language of warfare." If you accept that Burma is unmendably torn, then you can argue that a strongman government is needed to hold the mess together. This line of reasoning is adopted not only by the junta, unsurprisingly, but also by Burma scholars like Michael Aung-Thwin, who suggest that average Burmese are simply more comfortable with a paternalistic ruler. "In Burma, they are far more afraid of anarchy than they are of tyranny," Aung-Thwin told Voice of America shortly after a brutal attack on Burmese opposition supporters in 2003.

The other, related leg for the Burma exception argument is that Burma lacks a structure for public debate. In a 2001 book, *Burma: Political Economy Under Military Rule*, historian Robert H. Taylor claimed that, unlike in the Philippines, for example, Burmese religious groups and media were not well-organized enough to guide protest or political opposition. "As an organization the monkhood is a much less tightly hierarchical and institution-

(Clockwise from top right) Burmese monks protesting this month in front of the British Houses of Parliament; the 1988 revolt against the Burmese junta, which was brutally suppressed; Burmese boats carrying supplies to the British front lines in World War II; the diverse wares of Rangoon's booksellers; vendors hawking state-run newspapers.

Photos by AP Images

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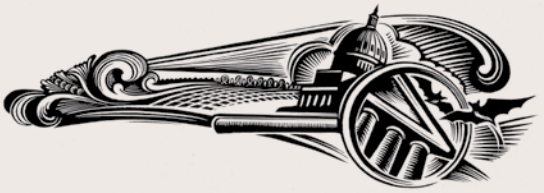
ally regulated body than is the Catholic Church," Taylor argued. This "makes a nationally coordinated movement much more difficult."

Again, this argument provides a rationale for supporting the junta. If you don't believe that reform can come from outside the junta, the logical place to look is, of course, inside. In a 2004 policy paper, Taylor claimed the military contains "reformers who understand the necessity of power-sharing and democratization." According to Taylor (who, perhaps not coincidentally, once served as a consultant



On the Hill

WASHINGTON WEINER

The K Street hot dog in the age of reform.

Ken Gross, a lawyer with Skadden who advises lobbyists and their clients on how to throw ethically acceptable parties, was recently puzzling over a difficult problem. One of the fabulous election-year pleasures for big corporations is sponsoring sumptuous breakfasts for members of Congress and other politicos at the Democratic and Republican nominating conventions. But, recently, Congress cracked down on the wild salmon benedict and toasted pecan waffles. A new gift ban—passed as part of the Democratic majority's promise to bring ethics reform to Washington—prohibits companies that employ lobbyists from giving Hill employees free meals. Is corporate America's favorite breakfast tradition doomed?

Fortunately, Gross thought of some ways to save the day by parsing the term "meal" using the nutritional pyramid. Bread, which is really a snack and not a meal, is ethical to serve a congressman. Protein—because of its suggestion of "main course"—is problematic. "It's going to have to be rolls and doughnuts," Gross mused. "You can't serve eggs. . . . Once you put tuna fish on the bagel, it becomes a sandwich."

Gross is just one of a number of ethics lawyers, lobbyists, members, and staffers who have been busily figuring out ways to circumvent the new rules. One might think that, if a legislative majority passes a law, that means a majority of legislators want to try to take it seriously. But, among those who work in the Capitol, the cause of ethics reform tends to be a faithless religion. Getting around the new ban is tough, though, because it is the most stringent ever imposed. The last gift ban happened in 1995, when, chastened by Ross Perot's anti-lobbyist harangues, the Republican Congress put a $50 limit on lobbyist-sponsored meals and gifts. But Washington culture quickly adjusted itself to the hardship. Club-level seats at Wizards games normally valued at around $100 started appearing for the gift-ban-friendly price of $49.50. A Virginia golf course offered a special package with a round of golf, a hot dog, and a Coke for just under $50. There were even semantic attempts to get out of the ban: The president of the Republican Club's restaurant, which saw its business drop in 1995, tried to get the ethics committee to exempt it with this exquisitely Talmudic piece of logic: "We're not a restaurant, we're an extension of the political party." For those who didn't want to bother with the rules at all, there was one enormous loophole—no enforcement.

But this time is different. Democrats have decreed that all meals, regardless of their price, are verboten. They've also reduced the allowed amount for gifts to $10, forcing corporations to proffer presents about as glamorous as those at an office Secret Santa party. Even more oppressive, there are now strict penalties for fooling with the rules. The Justice Department will have to report how many ethics busts it's investigating, allowing scandal-hungry reporters to publicize the cases, and the General Accountability Office has been given the authority to audit lobbying firms for disclosure violations. Breaking the rules can now get you thrown in jail. This zero tolerance policy is fostering an atmosphere of intense paranoia. Ed Kutler, a lobbyist for Clark & Weinstock, describes a recent visit to a café where he tried to pick up the tab on a staffer buddy's coffee. "What is that? What did you do that for?" the staffer hissed, recoiling from the cup.

Against this backdrop of fear, ethics advisers like Gross have become the Capitol's new priesthood, guiding legislators and lobbyists around the various venal traps they come across in their day-to-day activities and helping them petition the House and Senate Ethics Committees for indulgences.

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"My business is way up," says Cleta Mitchell, a GOP ethics lawyer for Foley & Lardner. Gross, in fact, had already been consulted on the coffee issue and had decided it fell on the right side of virtue because, so long as it wasn't gussied up with too much whipped cream, it was not a meal. "I asked our lawyer, Ken Gross," Kutler was able to reassure the staffer. "He said I could buy you a cup of coffee!"

To hear people around Washington tell it, the gift ban aims most cruelly not only at friends just trying to promote a little public-private peace and understanding—like Ed Kutler and his coffee date—but at the children, the lovers, the dying, and the destitute. For years, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) has hosted free children's movie previews for staffers' families, along with all the hot dogs the kids could want. But hot dogs, consisting of both bread and protein, are a meal, so now the MPAA will only allow waiters to pass hors d'oeuvres. One lobbyist describes the attendant chaos. "You have these starving children running around," she says, "and there are these clusters of kids around the areas where the waiters come out, tugging at pants legs."

Affairs of the heart are also subject to the ban. In training seminars, lawyers have been instructing amorous staffers that it's OK to accept a diamond engagement ring from a lobbyist "as long as you say 'yes' before you accept the ring," reports a Democratic House aide. Indeed, the gift ban can find a man even at the hour of his death. Earlier this year, the American Heart Association wanted to sponsor a free CPR training course to help House staffers handle cardiac emergencies on the job, but the House ethics committee ruled that the boxed lunch the cardiovascular health group planned to offer—a sandwich, apple, and cookie—as well as the $29.95 training kits constituted improper gifts.

These stories are nothing compared to what people fear could happen. Some of the city's inhabitants worry that the gift ban will basically ruin the Hill's social scene—especially for economically disadvantaged public servants. One of the hottest tickets in town has already been canceled—the New York delegation's corporate-sponsored dance party at the Congressional Black Caucus's annual legislative conference. "Some of [our members] come to Congress very poor, and this imposes a hardship on them," says Elsa Scott, the president of the CBC Foundation. "The members are living on $125,000 [a year], and they can't even go out to eat," wails one lobbyist. "They can't even go to dinner anymore in this fucking town!"

But, before you start feeling too sorry for our elected officials, remember that there are still exceptions. One allows for pre-existing friends to buy each other dinner—a big loophole considering that lobbying is all about hitting up pre-existing friends. Another popular one exempts lavish dinners that are "widely attended," meaning at least 25 non-Hill employees from a diversified set of companies have to come. Of course, these "non-Hill employees" can be lobbyists, diversity can mean three or four firms, and Washington party planners have been reassured not to sweat it if not all 25 RSVPs show. "If somebody gets run over by a bus on the way there, that's not a problem," explains Gross.

One particular exception is the most crucial. While the forces of evil may no longer be able to buy a congressman a $10 bucket of chicken, they can still give him a $1,000 bucket of cash. Fund-raising events are exempt from the gift rules, and lobbyists report that new styles of "intimate" lobbyist-and-member fund-raisers are cropping up at the fanciest restaurants—ethical, *so long as* everybody brings a check.

Charlie Palmer Steak, the restaurant on the ground floor of Washington's influence-peddling temple at 101 Constitution Avenue, is the kind of expense-account place lobbying reform was supposed to empty. On a recent Friday lunch hour, though, it was packed; men in jewel-colored silk shirts and ladies with anchorwoman-caliber sculpted hairdos clustered near the indoor pond, waiting for tables. "Has business been affected [by the lobbying reforms]?" I asked the diminutive maître d'.

"No, I haven't seen much change," he said, surveying the room.

"You know, because it can even affect friends going out with each other," I pressed.

The maître d' just laughed. "I don't think we get many friends entertaining friends in here."

Eve Fairbanks

to a British oil company that invested in Burma), the West should engage more fully with the junta, backing off from sanctions, to encourage these leaders to come to the fore. Until the recent protests, both the European Union and the British government were considering acting on this advice.

They would be wise not to, however, since the Burma exception argument falls apart on examination. The idea that Burma's ethnic divisions would preclude democracy is only convincing if you ignore the history of its giant neighbor, India. The ethnic violence in postcolonial India was worse than that in Burma, yet the country has held together to build a powerful democracy. Similarly, Indonesia, a vast archipelago of ethnic groups, has managed to form the most vibrant democracy in the region by embracing federalism. Even Cambodia, another diverse society plagued by civil war, now has a stable, if flawed, democracy in place. True, Burma suffered under the British, but it was not a "peculiarly debilitating colonial legacy," as Thant Myint-U claims. India, Malaysia, Kenya, and other colonies suffered without losing all prospects for democratization.

The second point in the Burma exception argument—that no opposition network exists—dissolves after a glimpse at Burmese history, not to mention the last few weeks. During the 1988 protests, the country witnessed a vast flowering of unions, print publications, and other organizations. Even during the bleakest times, Burmese continued debating the nation's fate, though more quietly: Several years ago, I sat in the corner of a noodle shop in Rangoon and listened to a local publisher and his friends hash out politics. And, just this week, numerous Burmese found creative ways to get photos and stories about the crackdown to news outlets around the world. As for religious groups, the power and organization of the Buddhist monks was on full display during last month's marches. In fact, unlike many other authoritarian states, Burma has a recent history of democratic rule, memories of which would aid a transition back to democracy. Between independence in 1948 and the military coup in 1962, Burma enjoyed a democratic government and a period of strong economic growth. Even more recently, in 1990, the Burmese people participated in a real election, in which the junta's proxy party was defeated by the opposition National League for Democracy. (The junta simply refused to turn over power.)

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As these examples suggest, the central problem with the Burma exception argument is that it lays the blame for Burma's problems squarely with the people, when, in fact, the problem is the junta. Contrary to Thant Myint-U's argument that the junta is less repressive than former nearby dictatorships, it is far more brutal. In Thailand, for example, after a crackdown on demonstrators in 1992 in Bangkok, the military heads willingly sat down with the protest leaders at an audience in front of the king and then gave way to civilian rule. The Indonesian dictator Suharto paved the way for democracy by stepping down after massive civilian protests in 1998. In Burma, the junta has created a situation in which brutality is more likely by isolating soldiers from civilians in a separate, military-only education system and by moving the capital to the middle of the jungle. You are a lot more likely to shoot at people you've never had any contact with.

Another factor that the Burma exception argument doesn't consider is the halfhearted and frequently craven policies of the international community. For decades since the 1962 coup, democratic nations could not decide whether to isolate or embrace the Burmese military. The United States and Great Britain courted the generals until the late '80s—Queen Elizabeth served tea to crazed former junta chief Ne Win—and then sanctioned them in the '90s. Burma's closest neighbors, dependent on the country's oil, timber, and gas, recently have been unwavering in their support; India, seeking to counterbalance China's power in the area, has reached out to the generals, selling them arms. And China is the regime's major aid provider and has blocked tougher U.N. actions on Burma. The unwillingness of these nations to stand up to the junta has demoralized Burma's reformers.

Whether those pro-democracy activists will succeed is a matter of huge importance, not only to the 55 million Burmese but also to the untold millions worldwide in similar circumstances. The Burma exception argument, now, is no exception: The same argument is being used to bolster oppressive regimes elsewhere, too. In Hong Kong, for instance, local leaders opposed to reform warn that democracy will cause chaos. "Eventually, we'll fight for democracy," said one spokesperson for an anti-democratic party. "But, before that, we need a more mature voting group." These ideas are mistaken and cruel. And if there's any country that can prove them to be so, it's Burma.

Joshua Kurlantzick

Charm School

Receiving psychotic dictators: an etiquette guide.

To the terrors of public speaking—the dry throat, the nervous bladder, the fear that your notes are not in your pocket (even though two copies were there, and a third one was folded into your shoe, when you checked 30 seconds ago, and a minute ago, and a minute and 30 seconds ago …), the fear that no one will show up to hear you, the desperate hope that no one will show up to hear you, concern that your material will fill about 20 minutes of the hour you are expected to entertain, alarm that you'll only be halfway through that same material when your hour runs out and the fellow in the first row starts looking exaggeratedly at his watch and making mad decapitation gestures, mental self-abuse and visions of Alzheimer's because you cannot remember that fellow's name even though you just spent two hours at dinner with him—*and* he is wearing a large badge (you cannot read the badge, which is a relief because it means that you *are* wearing your reading glasses, something that otherwise would also be weighing on your mind as the moment approaches)—to all these and more must be added a new horror: You might be introduced by Lee Bollinger.

Bollinger, as we all know (which was part of his purpose, of course), is the president of Columbia University. Last month, speaking of mad decapitation, Columbia invited the president of Iran whose name escapes me—Gordon Brown? John Edwards? Mahmoud Ahmadinejad? something like that—to address its students on pressing issues of the day. Not everyone—not even every head of state who is in New York for the annual opening of the United Nations—is invited to speak at New York's most prestigious university. President Bush, for example, was in town for his traditional opening-day role of throwing the first U.N. resolution into the wastepaper basket, and he probably could have wrangled an invitation from Columbia, but they didn't exactly come chasing after him.

ANTHONY RUSSO

And not everybody who is invited to speak at Columbia gets introduced by the president. Until last month, most people would probably have considered that an honor. Enough has been written about Ahmadinejad lately, in connection with this very speech among other reasons, that Bollinger could have honestly gotten away with the classic "this is a man who needs no introduction." Listening to what Bollinger had to say, Ahmadinejad no doubt felt that he certainly didn't need *this* introduction.

Bollinger is a lawyer and a scholar of the First Amendment. To the vexing problem of free speech for people you really wish would shut up, he has found a novel and unique solution: Let them speak, but be extremely rude. In the technical parlance of academia, Bollinger "drilled him a new one."

Or, at least, that was his apparent intention. Bollinger noted all the people who have been executed by Ahmadinejad's government, Iran's interference in our interference in Iraq, Iran's nuclear ambitions, its oppression of women and homosexuals, and so on. All this was no news to Ahmadinejad, nor did it require any particular courage for Bollinger to say it. There is no more captive audience than a speaker listening to his introduction. Ahmadinejad is proud of the record Bollinger outlined. Bollinger's only truly wounding remark was when he accused Ahmadinejad of being a "petty and cruel dictator." Petty? Petty?? What does it take to qualify as a real dictator in Bollinger's book? Throwing down this particular gauntlet may have been no favor to the world.

We don't all oppress minorities and women, plan to develop nuclear weapons, or execute people for crimes committed when they were children (though, on this last item, the United States was right up there with Iran and only a very few other countries until just two years ago). But we do all have our faults. Will future Columbia speakers be introduced as "one of the phoniest pseudo-intellectuals of our day"? Or, "a man who has spilled soup on his tie in every major restaurant in New York and is renowned for his small tips"?

Forever, universities have tried to provide good role models for their students. The result, especially at graduation ceremonies, has been a tradition of boring, bromidic, and vain speakers whose subtext generally is, "You should try to be as wonderful as I am. But you can't." Perhaps it's time for a new approach. Some wealthy Columbia graduate could endow a speaker

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series: "Jerks, Lamebrains, and Moral Degenerates." The idea would be to expose Columbia students to the kinds of bad influences they should not use as role models. With the death of Saddam Hussein, there is currently a shortage of high-wattage bad guys in the heads-of-state category. Oh, there are plenty of bad governments. But there is an opening for a charismatic evil dictator type at the moment. Many feel that Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, or Fidel Castro (who needs no introduction), or Russia's Vladimir Putin, or others might qualify. But each of them has fans as well. The great catch would be Osama bin Laden, of course. I wonder who his agent is.

In any event, it wouldn't be hard to put together a terrific speakers series. Who wouldn't come to hear O.J. Simpson on "How To Save Your Marriage," or Dick Cheney on "Power and Image in Post-Industrial Society"? Lee Bollinger could do the introductions, of course, making each of them feel truly unwanted.

Michael Kinsley

Idle Worship

In praise of Fred Thompson's laziness.

When Fred Thompson finally joined the presidential field last month, *Newsweek* greeted him with a cover story that bored into the essential question about the man: Is he too lazy to win? The answer seems to be yes, and, for evidence, the article cited Thompson's reluctance at the Minnesota State Fair to meet the sculptor of the Butter Princess, a 90-pound female bust carved from pure butter. He apparently wanted a strawberry milkshake instead and had to be coaxed into greeting the dairy sculptor. It was, *Newsweek* decreed, "a small but telling moment," a reminder of doubts about Thompson's willingness "to work hard enough" to become president.

Shortly after, *The New York Times* dinged him for a campaign visit to Florida that featured "no more than three campaign stops a day." The *Times* deemed this "a relatively leisurely schedule."

Only three events a day? Unenthused about the butter princess? Someone stop this man from getting near nuclear weapons! At least, that's the curious implication when people talk about Fred Thompson: that Thompson's laziness makes him unsuited to be president. It's an image that threatens to ruin his campaign before it has a chance. "Saturday Night Live" has turned him into a joke ("I'm not sayin' I don't want to be your president, because I kinda do") and influential conservatives doubt his mettle. Thompson "has no passion, no zeal, and no apparent 'want-to,'" Focus on the Family founder James Dobson said recently.

But this is deeply unfair. Not the notion that Thompson is lazy; he clearly is. (The quotation he chose for his high school senior portrait reads, "The lazier a man is, the more he plans to do tomorrow.") What's unfair is the idea that laziness disqualifies him from the presidency. In a society that has grown to fetishize work, laziness has gotten a bad rap. Moreover, a little laziness may be just what we want from our next president.

Maybe it's not surprising that people are lining up to make fun of Thompson's work ethic. After all, it's a defining fact of our economy that Americans are toiling harder than ever. The average American man today works 100 more hours per year than he did in the 1970s, according to the economist Robert Frank. And, as a recent TNR editorial noted, paid vacation time is dwindling fast ("Getaway," August 6). Full-time workers in the U.S. enjoy an average of just twelve vacation days per year (the Brits get at least 20; the French 30). Some workers get none at all.

Unfortunately for Thompson, nowhere has workaholism taken deeper hold than in the political press corps. Not long ago, the profession's chieftains were hard-drinking late-night poker-playing bon vivants (think Jack Germond or R.W. Apple). But that generation has been succeeded by a newer breed composed of type-A reporters who work nonstop—writing stories, blogging, hitting the MSNBC chat shows. The Puritan work ethic of these journalists is hardly compatible with long nights at the hotel bar or the pleasures of extended downtime. "They tend to drink white wine

David Cowles

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or beer rather than Irish whiskey," Germond wrote in his 1999 memoir, "and they carry cell phones so they can talk to their offices more than the once or twice a day I considered adequate. They go out running early in the morning, and a lot of them eat salad from room service, believe it or not." There's no proving it, but it may be that "the moralistic snot-nosed reporters of today," as a veteran newspaperman puts it, simply look down on Fred Thompson's lackadaisical style.

Knowing this, most candidates dare not allow themselves to be branded as anything but fanatical workers. Indeed, they even find ways of driving themselves to needless exhaustion simply to advertise their tirelessness. Shortly before the 2004 Iowa caucuses, for instance, John Kerry embarked on a nonstop 24-hour bus tour. Kerry advisers touted this, according to *The Boston Globe*, as "a grueling schedule that would reflect Kerry's own taste for hard work." But Kerry's tour involved little interaction with voters, the *Globe* noted. It was a "campaign gimmick" staged for the benefit of trailing TV cameras. In other words, Kerry drove around in a bus for 24 hours to show people he's the kind of guy who will drive around in a bus for 24 hours. An important qualification for a Lynyrd Skynyrd roadie, perhaps, but not a president.

Thompson's perfect foil is Mitt Romney, whose unrelenting work ethic suggests a well-coiffed cyborg with a circuitry-packed cranium. According to the Associated Press, Romney frequently hits the campaign trail by 7 a.m. and doesn't stop until 10 p.m. On a good day, Romney might cram in seven appearances. Lest you miss the point, one Romney TV ad features him on an intense jog, drenched in sweat, while a narrator recites his record of accomplishment. Romney has been rewarded with flattering press coverage of his corporate-executive regimen, and we are meant to believe this is the sort of workaholic who should be running the country.

But who says fanatical drive is essential in a great leader? Winston Churchill frequently stayed in bed until 11 a.m., worked in his pajamas, and enjoyed long afternoon siestas. (Some doctors argue that taking mid-afternoon naps—a practice guaranteed to draw instant mockery from friends and coworkers—leads to better work performance.) Nor is hard work necessarily a virtue. Take our most industrious recent presidents. Richard Nixon worked diligently—frequently in the name of persecuting his enemies—while Jimmy Carter moistened his brow laboring over such matters as scheduling for the White House tennis court and precision hostage rescues.

The gold standard for presidential laziness was surely set by Ronald Reagan. According to his biographer, Lou Cannon, Reagan often didn't start his days until 9:30 a.m., finished them shortly after 5 p.m., and usually took Wednesday and Friday afternoons off. When Reagan once complained during his 1980 campaign that his schedule began too early, Cannon writes, an adviser told him to get used to it, because, once in the White House, Reagan would have a national security aide arriving at 7:30 every morning to brief him. "Well," Reagan replied, "he's going to have a helluva long wait." Cannon concludes that Reagan "may have been the one president in the history of the republic who saw his election as a chance to get some rest." You may not admire Reagan's record. But the primary voters Thompson is wooing certainly do, making the Gipper's example an ideal comeback next time someone calls Fred lazy.

Doesn't George W. Bush—with his inseparable feather pillow and long hours with ESPN—prove the perils of laziness? Not at all. As his recent biographer, Robert Draper, told me, Bush may be inattentive to detail, but he is not in fact lazy. To the contrary, Bush is a fitness freak, a punctuality obsessive, and an early riser. (In 2004, *The New York Times* reported that Bush wakes up at 5 a.m. and reaches the Oval Office by 7 a.m., an hour before his daily national security briefing.) "There's a visceral restlessness to him, a desire not only to be punctual but to start early and finish early, that results in him almost racing through his days," Draper says. Bush's problem isn't that he shunned work, but rather that he took it on without being prepared. Starting a war, after all, is not the act of a lazy man. It involves far more long meetings and complicated speeches than simply letting a troublesome problem fester. If Fred Thompson is as lazy as reputed (and if he's anything like me), he'd have stuck a Post-it note to his wall back in 2002 reading SADDAM? and then never quite gotten around to invading. Which, in retrospect, may not have been such a bad thing.

Michael Crowley

ANTHONY RUSSO

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Jeri Rigged

The machinations of Mrs. Fred Thompson.

MICHELLE COTTLE

No one thought Jeri Kehn could do it. Back in 2000, the dishy young Republican operative, then 33, had Washington wags atwitter over her high-profile quest to capture the famously footloose Fred Thompson. Divorced from his high school sweetheart in 1985, the senator and erstwhile actor, then 57, had become one of the hottest tickets in town. A deep-drawling, broad-shouldered six-and-half footer, Thompson had a devastating Southern charm, with a gilding of movie-star glamour. Country music bombshell Lorrie Morgan, cosmetics queen Georgette Mosbacher, conservative pollster Kellyanne Fitzpatrick, and *Time* columnist Margaret Carlson were among Hollywood Fred's better-known, better-heeled paramours.

Kehn (pronounced "keen"), by contrast, was neither rich nor famous. A Midwestern gal of modest means, she had met the older, more established Thompson on July 4, 1996, in a Kroger check-out line in Nashville. Two years later, she moved to Washington to try her hand at political work and to pursue their relationship. But, while Kehn impressed Beltway types with her quick grasp of their culture, few gave her much chance of realizing her romantic aims. Thompson had never been known as a one-woman man—not even during his early, still-married days as a fledgling lobbyist living alone in Washington while his first wife, Sarah, raised their three kids back in Nashville. One of Fred's old flames from his pre-divorce era recalls with a laugh that she was not Thompson's only paramour at the time of their involvement and observes that good ol' Fred (with whom she stayed friendly post-romance) has always been something of a Clintonesque bad boy with the ladies. Once he and Sarah split, Thompson's romantic life approached the status of Washington legend. As he chuckled to Hill Republicans earlier this year, "I was single for a long time, and, yep, I chased a lot of women. And a lot of women chased me. And those that chased me tended to catch me." The swinging senator was considered unlikely to settle down again with any one woman—much less a mid-level party operative from Naperville, Illinois, no matter how young and fetching.

And so you could almost hear the collective gasp when, on June 29, 2002, Kehn and Thompson tied the knot in a small, private ceremony at the First Congregational Church of Christ of Naperville. Even some friends of Fred's and of Jeri's recall being stunned by the news. It seemed Washington—and perhaps even Thompson—had underestimated Kehn. She may not have been a Music City diva or a multimillionaire mogul, but she was a salesgirl extraordinaire. From her fresh-out-of-college job peddling mortgages for Sears to her later mission hawking the Republican message to the media, Kehn had learned to woo reluctant—even hostile—customers. She had the gifts of perseverance, projecting confidence in the face of uncertainty, spotting opportunity, insinuating herself into a situation, and elbowing out the competition—all of which proved useful in closing the deal to become Mrs. Fred Thompson.

As it happens, these skills also come in handy when selling a presidential candidate. For, although Jeri Thompson is hardly the Machiavellian mastermind of recent campaign lore, most agree that, without her aggressive involvement, there would be no Thompson campaign. In the beginning, say those familiar with the campaign, it was basically just Jeri and Fred sitting around weighing the pros, cons, and possibilities. Seeing the void in the Republican field, Jeri set about convincing a chunk of both the party's grassroots and its elite that Fred has the makings of a unifying leader. (Last year, for instance, she enlisted Republican p.r. guru and pal Mark Corallo to help raise Fred's profile around Washington.) More importantly, she sold the idea to Fred Thompson. It's not that Fred couldn't imagine himself in the White House—he had, after all, toyed with the idea of running back in 2000. (Plus, he has all that experience from his role as commander-in-chief in the terrorism thriller *Last Best Chance*). Those close to the candidate, however, have long said he lacks the political obsessiveness to run a traditional campaign, with the endless speechifying and traveling and sucking-up it entails. Jeri helped Fred envision a different way to run, one that relied heavily on webcasting and other high tech outreach, and helped shape his image as the true conservative in this race. And, most broadly, she continues to supply the necessary drive that many people suspect Fred lacks.

But, with Thompson finally in the race, Jeri's sales skills are facing their toughest test yet. On the heels of its late start, Team Thompson has drawn fire for its anemic fund-raising and campaign schedules. And reports from the trail suggest the phlegmatic senator is having a tough time conveying—much less generating—enthusiasm for his bid. Already, people are grumbling that perhaps Thompson's heart isn't in this fight. Which raises the question of whether Jeri, having assumed a central psychic role in the campaign, has overreached with her latest pitch. Even if she manages to sell herself to voters, can she sell them on a candidate so clearly ambivalent about closing the deal?

Last June, at a fund-raiser for the Virginia GOP, Jeri Thompson entered on her husband's arm looking more Dallas beauty queen than D.C. power player. The hair was a shade too bright, the skin a shade too tan, and the sleeveless V-neck dress a shade too snug. Although Jeri is chronologically only 24 years Fred's junior, she is a young-looking 41 to his old-looking 65, making the gap appear much larger. And, as the crowd swarmed and the TV lights dazzled, Jeri's Hollywood glitz beside Fred's grizzled mug brought to mind less an aspiring First Lady and president than Anna Nicole Smith vamping next to a wizened J. Howard Marshall II.

Jeri's fans (and Jeri) grumble that focusing on her looks—or on political wives in general—is a juvenile, trivial distraction from more important issues in this race. Maybe. But it is a distraction the majority of Americans indulge. Some 60 percent of voters say they consider a presidential candidate's spouse at least somewhat important when deciding whom to support, with Republicans far more concerned with connubial matters than either Dems or Independents. For her part, Jeri faces any number of hurdles in the First Spouse race—the visually

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arresting age disparity with her husband being just one. Fortunately for Team Thompson, she has a proven track record of successfully repackaging herself and marketing a new and improved Jeri.

Kehn's period of transformation began in 1996, the year she met Thompson. At the time, she was living in Nashville with her college boyfriend, Bernard "Chip" Alvey, and selling ad time for a local radio station. There was nothing in Kehn's background—save, perhaps, a decent work ethic—that suggested she was headed for a life less ordinary. Born in Hastings, Nebraska, her family moved to Naperville when Jeri was three (around the time her sister was born) so dad Jerry could take a job at Bell Labs. Her parents divorced when Jeri was twelve, and the Kehn sisters found themselves spending increasing time on their grandparents' farm back in Nebraska. Her mother Vicki worked as a librarian, and, even after her remarriage to music teacher Ron Keller three years after her divorce, she expected young Jeri to work for life's little extras. (Unlike most of her sorority sisters at DePauw University, Kehn waitressed all through school.) Universally described by friends and former colleagues as outgoing, energetic, and confident, Kehn went to work after college in sales for a communications services firm and for Sears Mortgage in Chicago. Cold-calling potential clients, the perky, chatty former pep-squad member knocked on doors, flashing her megawatt smile, peddling her wares, and learning to persevere in the face of rejection.

By the time she was in her late twenties, living in Nashville with Alvey, Kehn's future looked less sunny, as she stumbled into and out of financial trouble. In 1994, a court ordered Kehn to pay $10,000 in civil damages stemming from a 1990 car accident in Illinois. In 1996, a Davidson County court in Nashville garnished her wages to cover some $900 in bills to an anesthesiologist. The next year, the courts again moved to garnish her pay, this time over $1,700 owed to Nashville's Baptist Hospital. By then, however, Jeri had left her job, and the debt was never discharged. Facing debts of his own (including $93,000 owed a builder), Alvey was in no position to bail out his girlfriend—and, anyway, it remains unclear how serious the two were by then. Today, neither Thompson nor Alvey seems to recall when they stopped dating. And, although multiple court filings on her medical debts list Jeri's name as Kehn-Alvey, both Alvey and the Thompson campaign have said that the couple were never married.

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It was during this rocky time that Kehn crossed paths with the dashing, successful, significantly older Thompson while grocery shopping. One can only imagine the impact the suave senator—his career built on the ability to project an aura of stolid, comforting authority—had on the untethered Gen Xer. Within a year or so, it became public knowledge that the pair were casually dating.

Thompson was the vehicle not only for Kehn's personal transformation but for her professional one as well. Around the time the two met, Kehn began moonlighting with Internet entrepreneur Roger Schneider to develop a website about Tennessee politics. Originally, the plan was to create a site where insiders could swap insights and chase down rumors about the legislature. But, by mid-1997, it was clear the plan was doomed, and Schneider began toying with the idea of creating sites for prominent politicians. When Jeri told him that she was dating Thompson—who, she posited, might run for president in 2000—Schneider suggested they pitch to the senator's office the idea of "a world-class website" to be developed and maintained to the tune of $45,000 a year. As Schneider tells it, Kehn was enthusiastic and unabashed about soliciting her new beau. "Jeri was extremely keen—ah, sorry about the pun," he chuckles, "on getting the senator involved in the Internet. She did not want him being behind." Two weeks after it was submitted, the proposal was rejected by Thompson's staff as "technically vague and stunningly overpriced."

Undeterred, Kehn regrouped and worked out a deal to host a text chat between Thompson and constituents. Recounting how Kehn kept the project on track, Schneider notes admiringly, "She was sort of the energizing element in the program."

Soon thereafter, Kehn set her sights on a bigger playing field. One day in late '97 or early '98 (folks are a little fuzzy on the dates), an old sorority sister of hers, working as an aide to then–Majority Leader Trent Lott, was stopped on the Senate floor by Thompson, who mentioned having made Kehn's acquaintance. The next week, Kehn phoned her old friend in search of a political job. The two Pi Phis hadn't stayed close, but the aide hooked Kehn up with Mitch Bainwol, then chief of staff at the Republican National Committee. Bainwol, in turn, recommended her to the committee's head of public affairs, Cliff May, who hired her to raise the party's TV profile. Kehn proved a quick study. "She very quickly kind of learned who was who at the various networks and various shows and what the various shows wanted," says May. Better still, he adds, "she very quickly got quite friendly with all of them."

Jeri Thompson, pre–First Lady makeover.

Indeed, in many ways the RNC job was tailor-made for Kehn, as the one-time saleswoman found herself knocking on producers' doors, flashing that smile, making charming small talk, proffering armloads of lox and bagels that are remembered fondly to this day, and learning to win over cynical, skeptical audiences. One hard-boiled producer who dealt with Kehn remembers her as a gifted "schmooze-meister" and quips, "Under that thick layer of Max Factor is a pretty smart cookie!"

Charting the precise arc of Jeri's Washington career is tricky, since no one—including her—recalls her exact tenure at any particular job. Nor is there a helpful paper trail: According to her campaign spokesperson, the sole copy of Jeri's resumé was destroyed when the family's home flooded some time past—an explanation that sounds suspiciously like "the dog ate my homework." It is, however, unclear why the campaign would object to a close parsing of Jeri's job history: Even the rough timeline already known effectively undermines their aggressively promoted narrative of her having been a political power player before ever hooking up with Fred (which, after all, occurred before she moved to D.C.).

Moreover, whatever Kehn's myriad talents, there's little question that her involvement with Thompson helped open the occasional door. After a couple of years at the RNC, followed by a short stint as spokeswoman for the Senate Republican Conference Committee, Kehn decamped for the private sector, signing on as a media specialist for the public affairs firm Burson-Marsteller in February 2001. She was recruited by then–Chief Operating Officer Ken Rietz, a good buddy of (and current campaign adviser to) Fred Thompson. (A couple of her former Burson colleagues recently popped up in *The Washington Post*, anonymously grousing that Rietz created a job for her as a favor to Fred.) Eleven months later, Kehn left Burson and for a while did consulting for the lobbying powerhouse Verner Liipfert. But, by 2003, with the arrival of her and by-then-hubby Fred's daughter, Hayden, Jeri had left the workforce altogether.

All told, Jeri spent about five years in four political jobs. She is recalled as talented at selling a message and at rallying support for an issue from unexpected corners. What seems to have struck most people is her confidence; even when peddling a line of baloney, she did so with an air of total conviction. And, when she set her mind on a goal, she had no doubt but that she would achieve it—a trait that today is cited less in regard to any of her professional accomplishments than in her hard-fought domestication of Hollywood Fred.

Kehn has said that she decided she wanted to marry Thompson "when I knew he was the man that made me feel safe." It took considerable time and effort, however, before her knight in shining armor bought into the role. Those who knew Kehn during this period admit they thought she was deluding herself where Thompson was concerned. But Kehn was not ashamed to play hardball. After former *Washington Post* gossip columnist Lloyd Grove ran an item about Fred's supposed new honey (Kehn), both friends of Fred and friends of another of Fred's sweeties called to complain that Kehn, who had not denied the rumor to Grove, had in fact been scorned and was using the column to tweak Thompson. Then, of course, there was the infamous "Page Six" episode, in which Kehn phoned *The New York Post*'s gossip column to gripe about all the other fillies—and, yes, she named names—nosing around her stallion. In keeping with Kehn's trademark chutzpah, it was a tactical use of elbows so pointed and so public that the senator himself had to issue a statement effectively telling her to cool it.

But Kehn was determined to ride out the bumps, and eventually fate lent a

EVAN AGOSTINI/GETTY IMAGES/NEWSCOM

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tragic hand. In January 2002, Thompson's 38-year-old daughter, Betsy Panici, died of an accidental overdose of painkillers, after years of struggling with bipolar disorder and prescription-drug abuse. Thompson, devastated, announced that he would not stand for reelection that fall. "I've lost my heart for public service," he told friends. Friends of friends report that the tragedy prompted in the senator not just an emotional but also a deep spiritual crisis. As the not-quite-fairy-tale goes, Kehn stepped in to help the grieving father pick up the pieces. She told him how much she loved him; he at last realized how important she was to his life. Six months later, Thompson again entered into the bonds of holy matrimony.

Five years on, the senator seems content with his decision. At 65, he is the father of two young tots, Hayden, now four, and Sammy, who will celebrate his first birthday in November. Old friends speculate that Fred sees life with Jeri as something of a "do-over," a chance to atone for all the mistakes made as a not-especially-attentive husband and dad the first time around. Some still seem mildly surprised by Jeri's success: "I think we all admire her for corralling Fred and settling him down," chuckles Tom Ingram, who managed Thompson's first Senate race and now heads Lamar Alexander's Senate office. Marvels the TV producer, "The most spectacular battle Jeri ever fought was to win the heart and hand of Fred Thompson."

Jeri clearly hopes for the same sort of victory in selling her husband as president—and, of course, herself as First Lady. By all accounts, her initial efforts were a grand success. The early days of Thompson's proto-campaign saw Jeri, Fred, and a couple of pals, like veteran strategist (and Jeri's former boss) Ken Rietz, huddled around the couple's kitchen table. It was a charming image—vague but evocative—of a piece with Elizabeth Edwards goading John to get feisty or Bill Clinton coaching Hillary on how to emote. When Jeri was credited with prompting Fred to tape his cigar-chomping YouTube slap at lefty filmmaker Michael Moore, the Republican world cheered her cheek. Here is a gal who's got it all, they cooed: brains, sass, political savvy, and the nostalgia-evoking curves of a 1940s pinup.

But, as Fred's proto-campaign began to congeal and the stakes began to rise, the stories about Jeri became more concrete and less adorable. She was mucking around in the details too much. She distrusted Thompson's "testing the waters" chief Tom Collamore, and so all campaign decisions had to pass through her. In early July, the semi-implosion of rival John McCain's effort, featuring accusations of profligate spending, unnerved the Thompsons, prompting Jeri to further tighten her grip. No one could be hired, nothing could be purchased, and no event could be scheduled without her nod. Over the next two months, the still-unofficial campaign saw heavy staff turnover (Collamore, research director J.T. Mastranadi, the entire communications department . . .), with more than one departee (few of whom wished to speak on the record for this piece) citing troubles with Jeri. The week of Fred's long-anticipated announcement on September 4, snarky quotes surfaced in the press about how some female staffers had dubbed the campaign "The Devil Wears Prada II," likening Jeri's volatile temperament, demanding nature, and couture consciousness to those of the tyrannical fashion-magazine editor played by Meryl Streep in the 2006 film. (Campaign aides tend to take greater umbrage at getting chewed out by the candidate's wife than by your garden-variety boss.) "You never know how she's going to be every day," a source told the Capitol Hill weekly *Roll Call*. "When she clacks her high heels in the hallway, [staffers] all go scrambling" to get out of her path.

Jeri's defenders (some of whom also asked not to be quoted, even anonymously) insist that she is being misrepresented, in part because she is a pretty, youngish woman in a field that still harbors retrograde notions about pretty, youngish women. Some dismiss all criticism as an effort by disgruntled ex-staffers to scapegoat her for their own failures. Others offer a more nuanced interpretation, noting that Jeri, as one of the few members of Fred's tiny inner circle, often had to make the tough calls by default. Fred hates to be the heavy, says Ingram. "He would have an opinion, but he wouldn't want to be the bad guy. So somebody else has got to be. And, when there's nobody around the table but two or three folks—and he's out—that someone else" is likely to be Jeri. (One ex-staffer spins the dynamic more harshly, characterizing Fred as disengaged and Jeri as a control freak.)

The compressed time frame in which the campaign came together put additional pressure on Jeri, notes Ingram. "When you've got a huge mission with a short time to accomplish it, there's not always time for everybody to be as polite as they might like to be." Of course, with the campaign underway, he adds, the key now is to ease her into a more peripheral role. "She'll probably become the candidate's number one surrogate as opposed to his lead operative," he posits—an aim endorsed by Jeri herself in a recent sit-down with Fox News' Sean Hannity.

Indeed, publicly at least, the campaign has been hard at work on just such a move. In an August Web piece chivalrously headlined FRED THOMPSON: CRITICISM OF MY WIFE SHOULD BE DIRECTED AT ME, the not-yet-a-candidate informed *National Review* that Jeri's campaign prep work had been all at his behest. "She did what I asked her to do," said Thompson. "She always looks out for my best interests, and, when she sees something that she knows I would not approve of, or is not in my best interest, she voices that concern—in other words, just exactly the way I would want her to." Supporters and staffers, meanwhile, have begun rhapsodizing about Jeri's maternal devotion. "She doesn't want to run anything. I swear," Thompson adviser Mary Matalin recently reassured.

Even as she beats back the Lady Macbeth comparisons, Jeri is tackling the equally unflattering bimbo caricature. Since her May appearance before Virginia Republicans, she has undergone a low-key dowdying up. She has trimmed and darkened her bright blonde mane, and her wardrobe has grown more muted and less revealing. She still looks young, but no longer tarty—which should help in wooing all those conservative "values voters" contemplating Fred as their standard bearer.

No one thinks Jeri Thompson dragged an unwilling husband into this race. But Fred (whom one old girlfriend characterizes as a lovable egomaniac plagued by deep insecurities) has always had a weakness for people who have a dream for him—who see a way to parlay his charm and raw talent into Something Bigger. His first wife's family is credited with putting a lazy, directionless young Thompson on the road to law and politics. His mentor, former Tennessee senator Howard Baker, time and again propelled Thompson onto center stage politically. And now, Jeri is hard at work on securing her husband's biggest success—and her biggest sale—to date. But, as Thompson's candidacy continues to underwhelm, it seems increasingly doubtful that, doggedness aside, Jeri is enough of a saleswoman to convince America that her husband really should be president—and, more importantly, to convince her husband that he still wants the job. ◆

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War of Error

How Osama bin Laden beat George W. Bush.

PETER BERGEN

Omar bin Laden, the fourth son of the Al Qaeda leader, cuts a striking figure. In one photo, he stares out from beneath an Adidas baseball cap, his beard closely trimmed—an entirely different look from his father's seventh-century aesthetic. He wears jeans and sits next to his much older wife, a pale-faced British woman with pig tails, whom he divorced a mere five months into their marriage. While his father would not approve of his lifestyle choices, few men know the terrorist mastermind so well. When the Sudanese government exiled bin Laden in 1996, Omar was part of the small contingent that flew in a jet to Al Qaeda's Afghan sanctuary. He spent nearly five years living in the notorious training camps that bin Laden assembled.

But, between his departure from Sudan and his marriage, something happened to Omar: He turned against his father. I caught a small glimpse of his anger when I spoke with Huthaifa Azzam, the son of Palestinian cleric Abdullah Azzam, one of Osama bin Laden's most important mentors. In 2003, Huthaifa had accompanied Omar on a Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, where they spent four days together living in the same tent, performing religious observances, and talking about life in Afghanistan. Omar heaped abuse on his father for attacking the United States. "It's craziness. . . . Those guys are dummies," he said. "They have destroyed everything, and for nothing. What did we get from September 11?" In fact, these attacks had driven a permanent wedge between father and son. Soon after planes struck New York and Washington, Omar left Afghanistan in disgust. And, in the years since, he appears to have had no contact with his father.

When Omar fled the Al Qaeda training camps, the organization was in disarray. A 2002 letter written by an Al Qaeda member—and addressed to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the operational commander of the September 11 attacks—gives a sense of just how demoralized the group was:

> Consider all the fatal and successive disasters that have afflicted us during a period of no more than six months. Those observing our affairs wonder what has happened to us. Today we are experiencing one setback after another and have gone from misfortune to disaster. . . . I say today we must completely halt all external actions until we sit down and consider the disaster we caused. The East Asia, Europe, America, Horn of Africa, Yemen, Gulf, and Morocco [terrorist] groups have fallen, and Pakistan has almost been drowned in one push.

Al Qaeda's cadres were right to be dispirited. The United States appeared to have soundly defeated the terrorist organization. As Bruce Hoffman, a Georgetown professor and one of the world's leading authorities on terrorism, told me, "It's difficult to recall the extent to which it was believed that a decisive corner had been turned in 2002 as a result of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. We believed not simply that Al Qaeda was on the run, but that it had been smashed to bits."

But that was five very long years ago—five years during which Al Qaeda has not only survived but also managed to rebuild at an astonishing clip. The group's leadership has reconstituted itself and now operates rather comfortably along the largely lawless Afghan-Pakistan border. Last year, it came close to downing ten U.S. airplanes using liquid explosives—an attack that would have rivaled September 11 in magnitude. Al Qaeda has continually massacred Iraqi civilians over the past three years and has managed to keep the country locked in the grip of sectarian violence. Swathes of Afghanistan are in danger of reverting to Islamist control. The largest Algerian terrorist group announced last year that it was putting itself under Al Qaeda's umbrella—and has subsequently launched a series of attacks in North Africa against Western targets. Britain's domestic intelligence chief said last November that 30 terrorist plots were underway in her country—some of which would involve "mass-casualty suicide attacks"—and that Al Qaeda's Pakistan-based leadership was giving direction to its British followers "on an extensive and growing scale." Last month, Al Qaeda–linked militants who had trained at camps in Pakistan were arrested in Germany, where a prosecutor said they had acquired enough chemicals for what would have been "massive bomb attacks" targeting Americans in the country. In a small but telling sign of its restored confidence, Al Qaeda's production arm has cranked out a record number of videos and audiotapes this year. To top things off, according to Hoffman, the group's "determination to strike the United States from abroad again remains undiminished." And it may be getting closer to doing just that: A recent National Intelligence Estimate noted that Al Qaeda "has protected or regenerated key elements of its Homeland attack capability."

America's most formidable foe—once practically dead—is back. This is one of the most historically significant legacies of President Bush. At nearly every turn, he has made the wrong strategic choices in battling Al Qaeda. To understand the terror network's resurgence—and its continued ability to harm us—we need to reexamine all the ways in which the administration has failed to crush it.

Al Qaeda has always had a fundamentally apocalyptic mindset, but never more so than in December 2001. In the snowy mountains of eastern Afghanistan, a place with the cinematic name of Tora Bora, bin Laden and his men prepared for their final stand. They had watched the United States evict the Taliban from power while incurring only small numbers of casualties, and, now, they were on the run. As bin Laden would later recount in a 2003 video, the 300 Al Qaeda militants assembled at the mountain hideaway dug 100 trenches over an area of one square mile in preparation for the battle to come. Ayman Saeed Abdullah Batarfi, a Yemeni doctor now being held at Guantánamo, painted for American interrogators a scene of desperation. "I was out of medicine and I had a lot of casualties," Batarfi recalled. "I did a hand amputation by a knife, and I did a finger amputation with scissors."

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I got a sense for just how pessimistic Al Qaeda's leadership must have felt on my visits to Tora Bora in the years following the battle. The complex of mountains dotted with caves lies a three-hour drive up a narrow mud-and-stone road from the eastern Afghanistan city of Jalalabad. You can still find bin Laden's shattered two-room mud house and a destroyed crude swimming pool. In nearby fields, I saw enormous craters where 1,500-pound daisy-cutters had left their mark. "Day and night," bin Laden would later recall, "American forces were bombing us by smart bombs that weigh thousands of pounds and bombs that penetrate caves."

In fact, those bombs very nearly killed him. Late in the night of December 9, according to Abu Jaafar Al Kuwaiti, an Al Qaeda operative who was at Tora Bora, U.S. forces hit the bunker where bin Laden had been staying with "massive and terrorizing explosions." Al Qaeda's leader, however, was 200 meters away, having moved just two nights before.

Bin Laden was clearly in trouble, and he knew it. At some point during the battle, he would sustain a serious wound to his left shoulder. And, on December 14, around the time he finally fled Tora Bora, he wrote a final testament that included this bleak message to his offspring: "As to my children, forgive me because I have given you only a little of my time since I answered the jihad call. I have chosen a road fraught with dangers and for this sake suffered from hardships, embitterment, betrayal, and treachery. I advise you not to work with Al Qaeda."

Yet, even as bin Laden contemplated his own death and Al Qaeda seemed on the verge of defeat, Gary Berntsen, then commander of CIA operations in eastern Afghanistan, was worried. A gung-ho officer who speaks Dari, the local Afghan language, Berntsen realized that Afghan soldiers were likely not up to the task of taking on Al Qaeda's hard core at Tora Bora. In the first days of December, he had requested a battalion of Rangers—that is, between 600 and 800 soldiers—to assault the complex of caves where bin Laden and his lieutenants were believed to be hiding and to block their escape routes. That request was denied by the Pentagon, for reasons that have never been fully clarified. In the end, there were probably more journalists at Tora Bora than the 50 or so Delta and Green Beret soldiers who participated in the fight.

And so the task of encircling the area was passed off to local warlords—one of whom declared a truce with Al Qaeda at a critical moment in the battle, allowing members of the group to slip away. Muhammad Musa, a massively built, laconic Afghan commander who led several hundred of his soldiers on the Tora Bora front line, told me, "There were six American soldiers with us, U.S. Special Forces. They coordinated the air strikes. My personal view is if they had blocked the way out to Pakistan, Al Qaeda would not have had a way to escape." The strategy of relying on local proxies—a tactic that had served America so well in overthrowing the Taliban—proved disastrous at the Afghan campaign's crucial moment.

Everyone knows what happened next: Al Qaeda's leaders fled into the tribal areas of western Pakistan, where they began the long process of rebuilding their devastated organization. That process has gone far better than they could possibly have imagined as they slipped out of Afghanistan in late 2001 to the hum of American munitions blowing apart their last refuge in a country that had once, more or less, been theirs.

Over the subsequent six years, administration officials and their defenders have offered two arguments to minimize the American failure at Tora Bora. The first is that we don't really know whether bin Laden himself was there. In fact, there is a great deal of evidence that Al Qaeda's leader was at the mountain holdout in December 2001. Batarfi, the Yemeni doctor, has said he saw him there. Moreover, Berntsen told me that CIA officers at Tora Bora who were monitoring local radio transmissions overheard bin Laden talking during the battle. And an American military officer who was on the battlefield confirmed that American "collectors" scanning for radio signals in the area heard Al Qaeda's leader speak several times between December 7 and December 14.

The second argument is that, even if we did allow bin Laden and Al Qaeda's other top commanders to escape, they are no longer all that crucial to the organization's operations. And it is true that, in recent years, Al Qaeda has become more decentralized than it was before September 11. But, while they may no longer be ordering attacks over the phone, no one should doubt the continuing ability of bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman Al Zawahiri—who also escaped from Tora Bora—to set Al Qaeda's worldwide agenda. Since December 2001, their videos and audiotapes have reached hundreds of millions of people worldwide, many carrying specific instructions for militant cells. For instance, in September 2003, Zawahiri denounced Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf for supporting the U.S. campaign against Al Qaeda. Within three months, militants had launched two assassination attempts against Musharraf. In October 2003, bin Laden called for action against Spain because of its troop presence in Iraq. Five months later, terrorists killed 191 commuters in Madrid. In December 2004, bin Laden called for attacks against Saudi oil facilities. Fourteen months later, Al Qaeda attacked a plant in Abqaiq, one of the most important oil production facilities in the world.

In short, allowing Al Qaeda's leadership to escape from Tora Bora and fight another day has proven to be a costly mistake. And it was only the first of many.

The Bush team's next major misstep came as it set about rebuilding the country it had just conquered—or rather, for the most part, didn't. Afghanistan should have been a demonstration project of American resolve and American compassion: a signal to our enemies that, once evicted from their sanctuaries, they would never be allowed back; and a signal to our friends that democracy could flourish in a land where militant Islamists had once reigned. But, as Lieutenant General David Barno, the commanding general in Afghanistan in 2003, has dryly noted, "'Nation-building' was explicitly *not* part of the formula." According to a study by RAND, "Afghanistan has received the least amount of resources out of any major American-led, nation-building operation over the last 60 years." Specifically, the initial deployment of American soldiers to Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban was the smallest per capita peacekeeping force of any U.S. post-conflict deployment since World War II—some 6,000 soldiers in a country that is both 50 percent bigger geographically than Iraq and more populous too. Moreover, based apparently on its aversion to allies, the administration blocked any non-U.S. troops from deploying outside Kabul for the first two years of the occupation. Not only were *we* unwilling to police Afghanistan; we weren't going to let anyone else do it, either. The absence of Western boots on the ground meant that responsibility for security was often entrusted to local warlords—whose increased clout, in turn, slowed the formation of a real Afghan national army.

You get what you pay for, and, today, Afghanistan resembles nothing so much as Iraq in the fall of 2003, when the descent into chaos began. In 2006, IED attacks doubled, assaults on international forces tripled, and suicide bombings quin-

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tupled. In fact, last year saw the highest number of U.S. military and NATO casualties since the fall of the Taliban. And 2007 is shaping up to be even worse, with suicide bombings up 69 percent from last year. What's more, Afghanistan is now supplying almost all of the world's heroin. In Helmand and Kandahar—provinces in southern Afghanistan—more than a quarter of the population supports the Taliban, according to a poll released in March. Just one in ten Afghans has access to electricity, while the capital, Kabul, only has electricity for a few hours a day. America's neglect of Afghanistan since 2001 can only be described as an enormous missed opportunity.

And the reason for that missed opportunity was simple: By the time the Taliban fell, the Bush administration's attention was already elsewhere. According to Bob Woodward's book *Plan of Attack*, in late November 2001—even before the battle of Tora Bora—Bush asked the Pentagon to revamp its 800-page Iraq war plan. General Tommy Franks "was incredulous," Woodward writes. "They were in the midst of one war in Afghanistan and now they wanted detailed planning for another in Iraq? 'Goddamn,' Franks said, 'what the fuck are they talking about?'" In the months and years to come, the Iraq war would divert important resources, military and otherwise, from Afghanistan—missile-firing Predators, satellites, and key units such as the 5th Special Forces Group, which specializes in the Middle East and was pulled out of the country in the spring of 2002. It is heartbreaking, today, to imagine what might have been accomplished if the money spent on the Iraq war—hundreds of billions of dollars so far—had been plunged into creating a model state in Afghanistan.

The removal of Saddam Hussein would prove to be a boon to Al Qaeda—creating a base for the terrorist organization where none had existed before, energizing jihadists around the word, and confirming for many Muslims bin Laden's contention that the United States was at war with Islam. "Al Qaeda in Iraq" was founded in 2004 by Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, who had previously run a Jordanian terrorist outfit that was somewhat competitive with Al Qaeda. His group's subsequent attacks against Shia shrines, clerics, and civilians were the critical factor in Iraq's slide into civil war. Suicide attacks—the vast majority perpetrated by Al Qaeda—have killed more than 10,000 Iraqi civilians, according to Mohammed Hafez of the University of Missouri, whose 2007 book, *Suicide Bombings in Iraq*, is the authoritative study of the phenomenon.

To be sure, the administration has been able to claim some victories over Al Qaeda in Iraq during the last year. When it controlled the western province of Anbar in 2006, Al Qaeda imposed Taliban-style measures and punishments on the population and killed tribal leaders it considered rivals. This allowed U.S. forces an opening to begin turning Sunni tribal leaders against Al Qaeda—and, eventually, the group was run out of the province. The Anbar model of recruiting Sunni leaders to fight Al Qaeda is now being applied in other parts of the country with some success. But Al Qaeda in Iraq is hardly down for the count. According to the U.S. military, more than 4,000 Iraqis were killed or injured by Al Qaeda suicide attacks in the first half of 2007.

The fallout from the rise of Al Qaeda in Iraq has been felt far outside the country. Bush defenders have claimed that Iraq will reduce terrorism by drawing jihadists to the country like moths to a flame—where they can be killed or captured before doing damage in the West. But this assertion is unconvincing, because it incorrectly assumes that the world contains a finite number of jihadists. In fact, the pool of potential terrorists has expanded in the past four years. As the administration's own 2006 National Intelligence Estimate explains, "[T]he Iraq War has become the 'cause celebre' for jihadists … and is shaping a new generation of terrorist leaders and operatives." To test that thesis empirically, Paul Cruickshank of New York University and I compared the period after September 11 through the invasion of Iraq in March 2003 with the period from March 2003 through September 2006. Using numbers from the authoritative RAND terrorism database, we found that the rate of deadly attacks by jihadists had increased *sevenfold* since the invasion. And, even excluding terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan, fatal attacks by jihadists in the rest of the world have increased by more than one-third since March 2003.

This was not the way things were supposed to unfold. Indeed, not so long ago, the jihadists themselves believed that the United States was eliminating terrorists at an impressive rate. In 2004, Abu Musab Al Suri, a key Al Qaeda ideologue, released a book that summarized the damage sustained by his fellow militants in the immediate aftermath of September 11:

> America destroyed the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan, which became the refuge for the mujahideen. They killed hundreds of mujahideen who defended the Emirate. Then America captured more than six hundred Jihadists from different Arab countries and Pakistan jailed them. The Jihad movement rose to glory in the '60s, and continued through the '70s and '80s, and resulted in the rise of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, but was destroyed after 9/11.

But, since then, Iraq and Afghanistan have become locked in a self-reinforcing downward spiral—one that has handed the momentum in the war on terrorism back to our adversaries. After Saddam's fall, Iraq became a new headquarters of sorts for jihadists. Meanwhile, with the Bush administration's attention elsewhere, Al Qaeda took the opportunity to reassert itself along the Afghan-Pakistan border. And jihadists began to travel between the two regions, worsening the situation in both. As Art Keller, a CIA officer stationed in the tribal areas of Pakistan in 2006, told me, "People are going from the Afghan-Pakistan border to Iraq to learn the tactics and then come back. Seems like the reverse of the way the war on terror was supposed to work."

In September 2006, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf made one of his periodic visits to the United States. He was here, in part, to promote his grandiose memoir, *In the Line of Fire*, by sitting for an interview with NBC's "Today" show and bantering on Comedy Central with Jon Stewart. (Stewart obsequiously served the dictator tea and pronounced the book "remarkable.") But Musharraf wasn't just looking to drive up his Amazon ranking. As always, he was here partly to have his despotic ring kissed by Bush. And the president did not disappoint. At a joint Washington press conference, after telling Musharraf, "I admire your courage and leadership," Bush went on to address a deal that the Pakistani government had recently signed with militants in the tribal area of North Waziristan on the Afghan border. Bush assured the assembled reporters that his Pakistani counterpart knew what he was doing: "When President Musharraf said the peace deal is intended to reject Talibanization of the people and there will not be Taliban, there will not be Al Qaeda—I believe him."

Unfortunately, several months after that peace deal was signed, Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry, the top American commander in Afghanistan, disclosed that cross-border attacks from that area of Pakistan were 200 percent

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higher than the year before; and a U.S. military intelligence officer told the Associated Press that, following the deal, attacks in the border area had ballooned by 300 percent. Shortly thereafter, Lieutenant General Michael Maples, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, told the Senate Intelligence Committee, "Pakistan's border with Afghanistan remains a haven for Al Qaeda's leadership and other extremists. In a September accord with the Pakistan government, North Waziristan tribes agreed to curtail attacks into Afghanistan, cease attacks on Pakistani forces, and expel foreign fighters. However, the tribes have not abided by most terms of the agreement." Finally, after months of denial, administration officials were forced this summer to concede the obvious: that Musharraf's policy of appeasing the militants had been a failure.

And that, in a nutshell, characterizes Bush's approach to Pakistan: showering Musharraf with affection and largesse, only to receive progressively less in return with each passing year. America has handed $10 billion to the Pakistani government since September 11. Yet the Taliban and Al Qaeda remain headquartered in Pakistan. A U.S. military official in Afghanistan with access to intelligence information told me this spring that Taliban leader Mullah Omar "is still in Quetta," a major Pakistani city. And a Western official based in Pakistan told me that "target folders" about the locations of high-value Taliban and Al Qaeda targets were provided by the U.S. government to Pakistan in late 2006—but never acted upon. Moreover, the Bush administration has, on at least one occasion, refused to do what Pakistan will not: This July, *The New York Times* reported that Donald Rumsfeld nixed a proposed 2005 attack on a meeting of Al Qaeda leaders in Pakistan—a meeting thought to include Zawahiri—in part because the operation, which would have involved several hundred special forces and CIA personnel, could have destabilized Musharraf.

In the past few years, Musharraf has convinced the Bush administration that he is the only person who can prevent radical Islamists from taking over his country and getting their hands on Pakistan's nuclear weapons. But this is self-serving fiction. A September poll found that Pakistan's coalition of militant Islamist parties, known as the MMA, would receive only 3.5 percent of the vote in a contested election. (Last week, Musharraf coasted to reelection, as opposition parties boycotted the vote.) Having been duped by the myth of Musharraf's indispensability, Bush officials are now overly reluctant to push the Pakistani leader too hard on confronting Al Qaeda—for fear he will be seen as an American stooge, eventually toppled, and replaced by someone far worse.

This situation has been compounded by the fact that, for much of the past six years, few American spies were operating in Pakistan's tribal areas. Keller, the CIA officer, ran a spy network in one of the tribal regions in early 2006. While he noted that more agents have since been deployed, he said that, at the time, he was one of only a "handful" of CIA officers doing this kind of work in the seven tribal regions where Al Qaeda and Taliban militants are concentrated. "A great deal of the resources have gone to Iraq," he explained. "I don't think it's appreciated that the CIA is not really a very large organization in terms of field personnel."

Small wonder, then, that Al Qaeda continues to enjoy a safe haven in Pakistan's tribal areas. Or that militants linked to Al Qaeda have killed 200 Pakistani soldiers in suicide attacks during the past two months. Six years after September 11, the Bush administration has yet to receive the cooperation it needs from Pakistan. To borrow a word from Jon Stewart, this is "remarkable."

In the early 1990s, a former sergeant in the U.S. Army who went by the name "Jeff" began taking photos in Nairobi. Jeff, it turned out, had traded in his job with Uncle Sam for a position with Al Qaeda, and Osama bin Laden had asked him to scout potential targets for an attack in Kenya. Among the sites he studied was the U.S. Embassy. Eventually, having drawn diagrams and compiled a report, Jeff decamped for Khartoum, where he presented his findings to Al Qaeda's top brass. "Bin Laden looked at the picture of the American Embassy," Jeff would later recall, "and pointed to where a truck could go as a suicide bomber."

Jeff's report would serve as the basis for Al Qaeda's bombing of the U.S. Embassy in August 1998, an attack that killed more than 200 people. For much of the '90s, Jeff had lived a double life: shuttling in and out of Sudan and Afghanistan as an Al Qaeda operative while also working as a computer network specialist in California. One month after the 1998 bombing, Jeff—whose real name is Ali Mohamed—was arrested by the FBI in New York. Prior to September 11, he was the highest-level Al Qaeda operative in U.S. custody.

In time, Mohamed would prove to be a treasure trove of information about Al Qaeda. Facing the possibility of life in prison without parole, he entered a guilty plea and, as part of the bargain, detailed bin Laden's personal involvement in the 1998 embassy bombings as well as Al Qaeda's dealings with Hezbollah in the mid-'90s. He also agreed to cooperate in prosecutions of other terrorists. None of this was easy, of course. Daniel Coleman, a former FBI special agent who dealt with Mohamed and is regarded as one of the nation's leading authorities on Al Qaeda, recalls that "it took two years to get him to the point where we could safely say that he was reliable and not leading us on." But, eventually, he did—and physical coercion was not involved. "There is no need to use anything else other than the full legal scope and power of the justice system," Coleman says of his approach to interrogations. "To go outside of that is completely unnecessary."

Indeed, Coleman thinks the Bush administration's treatment of captured terrorists—holding so many outside the traditional justice system at Guantánamo while authorizing interrogation techniques that some observers would consider torture—has been largely a bust. He told me that most of the information he saw coming out of Guantánamo until his retirement in 2004 "was of no particular value." And Coleman believes that, unlike the intelligence the FBI extracted from Ali Mohamed, the information provided by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed—the September 11 operational commander who is reported to have been subjected to waterboarding while in U.S. custody—is "suspect" and "not useful in a court of law."

Coleman isn't the only one who feels this way. Michael Rolince, who, from 2002 to 2005, was special agent in charge of counterterrorism in the FBI's Washington field office—which handles not just threats to the capital region, but also many overseas cases—told me, "I don't recall any information that was relevant [to my office] coming out of Guantánamo." He also points out that "torture and coercion gets you, in the vast majority of cases, wrong information that takes you off on wild goose chases." And Brad Garrett, a former FBI agent who obtained uncoerced confessions from two notorious terrorists—Ramzi Yousef, mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and Mir Aimal Kansi, killer of two CIA employees outside agency headquarters that same year—told me that "coercive interrogation

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techniques have proven to be ineffective in producing reliable intelligence."

But Bush's decision to operate outside the boundaries of U.S. and international law has been worse than simply unnecessary; it has also actively harmed American interests. For one thing, by refusing to bring terrorists to trial, we have passed up valuable opportunities to dispassionately present evidence of Al Qaeda's bloodlust to the world at large. (Testimony in the 2001 embassy-bombing trial established for the first time that Al Qaeda had tried to acquire highly enriched uranium in the mid-'90s—which had the effect of publicly underscoring the group's plans for mass murder.) Moreover, Bush's legal approach to the war on terrorism has torpedoed America's good reputation around the world. In a BBC survey released this year, of the more than 26,000 people polled in 25 different countries, seven out of ten disapproved of the treatment of Guantánamo inmates, while half thought the United States plays a mostly negative role in the world. The numbers are far worse in Muslim countries—including democratic ones that should be natural allies. According to a recent Pew poll, America's favorability rating stands at 9 percent in Turkey (down from 52 percent before September 11) and 29 percent in Indonesia (down from 75 percent before September 11).

If, as the president explained in a speech last year, the United States is today engaged "in the decisive ideological struggle of the twenty-first century," right now we are on the losing side of the battle of ideas. Garrett, for one, understands why. "Interrogation techniques that violate human decency . . . can weaken others supporting us in fighting terrorism and can actually create more enemies," he says. In other words, Bush's legal strategy in the war on terrorism has been counterproductive. And the consequences for our safety are real.

Yet, for all Bush's obvious missteps, there is one inarguable bright spot in the war on terrorism, and it is no small matter: Since September 11, America has not been attacked again. Bush, unsurprisingly, has not been shy about taking credit for this. Al Qaeda, he explained last year, has failed to strike the United States a second time "because our government has changed its policies—and given our military, intelligence, and law enforcement personnel the tools they need to fight this enemy and protect our people." And a fair-minded observer might conceivably ask: Is it possible that, despite all he has done wrong, Bush has somehow managed to get the single most important thing right?

There is no doubt that some of the measures Bush has taken since September 11 have made us safer. First, the much-maligned Patriot Act accomplished something quite important, which was to break down the legal "wall" that had been blocking the flow of information between the CIA and the FBI. Second, the creation of the National Counter Terrorism Center has led to various agencies sharing data and analyzing it under one roof. (Although it should be noted that the center was the brainchild of the 9/11 Commission—whose establishment the Bush administration fought tooth-and-nail for more than a year.) Third, it is now much harder for terrorists to get into the country thanks to no-fly lists. Finally, cooperation between U.S. and foreign intelligence agencies has generally been strong since September 11. For instance, Al Qaeda's plot to bring down ten U.S. airliners was disrupted last year by the joint work of U.S., British, and Pakistani intelligence services.

That said, the key reason we have not been attacked again has nothing to do with Bush. In sharp contrast to Muslim populations in European countries like Britain—where Al Qaeda has found recruits for multiple terrorist plots—the American Muslim community has overwhelmingly rejected the ideological virus of radical Islam. The American Dream has generally worked well for Muslims in the United States, who are both better-educated and wealthier than the average American. There is no analogous "British Dream," "French Dream," or, needless to say, "EU Dream." None of this is to say that the limited job opportunities and segregation that are the lot of many European Muslims are the *causes* of terrorism in Europe—only that such conditions create favorable circumstances in which Al Qaeda can recruit. And, in the absence of those conditions on this side of the Atlantic, radical Islam has never gained much of a foothold—largely sparing us the scourge of homegrown terrorism. This is fundamentally a testament to American pluralism, not the Bush administration.

Consider the jihadists who have plotted or carried out the worst attacks here in recent years. Yousef flew in from Pakistan for the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Ahmed Ressam, an Algerian, tried to drive in from Canada on his way to bomb LAX airport in 1999. The September 11 hijackers all traveled to the United States specifically for the attacks. Of course, there are almost certainly homegrown Al Qaeda wannabes in America. But, without the Al Qaeda infrastructure that exists in Europe, these would-be terrorists are unlikely to have the training or capabilities to pull off mass-casualty attacks.

For America, then, the threat does not come from within, but rather from abroad. And, while Bush can take some credit for measures that have made it harder for foreign terrorists to get into the country, he must take the blame for the fact that his policies—in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Guantánamo—have greatly increased the pool of jihadist terrorists around the world. Since September 11, we have largely managed to block these jihadists from entering. But no country, no matter how vigilant, no matter how powerful, can hope to lock out every last member of an ever-multiplying, ever-more-sophisticated gang of trained killers forever. Which is why our best bet—and maybe our only hope—in the war on terrorism is to stop Al Qaeda long before it gets here.

It has been six years since we were a few hundred maddening meters from killing Osama bin Laden at Tora Bora—and, perhaps, a few hundred soldiers from finishing off his top lieutenants as well. Tora Bora seems very far away from New York, and, in many ways, it is. But the disastrous chain of events that began there in December 2001—a bungled bid to snag bin Laden, followed by a war in Iraq that gave new life to Al Qaeda, accompanied by a virtual abandonment of Afghanistan, compounded by a naïve approach toward Pakistan, topped off by a set of legal policies that has made America the bane of world opinion—may yet end in the streets of Manhattan. Indeed, if the last few years have taught us anything, it is that the steps from Tora Bora to Waziristan to Anbar to London—to beyond?—are not so large at all.

And so it bears mentioning that, the last few times I visited Jalalabad, my Afghan friends warned me strongly against traveling to Tora Bora. The area, they explained, had been taken over by jihadists. They were right: In August, American soldiers went into Tora Bora to take on hundreds of Taliban and Al Qaeda militants holed up there.

Meanwhile, reports surfaced that perhaps bin Laden had been in the area. Alas, we didn't get him this time either. ◆

Peter Bergen is a Schwartz senior fellow at the New America Foundation and the author of The Osama bin Laden I Know.

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Failing Upward

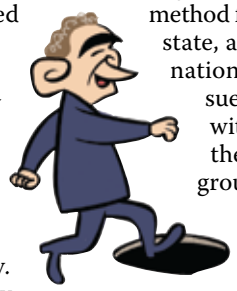
Relax, America will survive George W. Bush.

WALTER RUSSELL MEAD

NOTHING IN THE FIELD of international affairs is as scandalous and as perplexing as the fact of American power. From Revolutionary times to the present, virtually all observers foreign and domestic have agreed that Americans don't do foreign policy well. Moralistic, uninformed, unsubtle, alternately isolationist and hyperactive, hamstrung by a clumsy constitutional process and a public that oscillates between fatuous idealism and ignorant bellicosity, U.S. foreign policy has been shocking the world for more than 200 years.

And, worse still, we win. For two centuries, the United States has astounded critics with its bad foreign policy—and, for two centuries, the United States has steadily risen to an unprecedented level of power and influence in the international system. Why does the team with the worst skills in the league end up with so many pennants?

The spectacle is often surreal. The United States seems to wander nearsightedly but relatively unscathed past one hazard after another—like a version of the chronically oblivious cartoon character Mr. Magoo. Thomas Jefferson's embargoes against Britain and France during the Napoleonic Wars crippled U.S. trade and lowered our prestige; the episode remains a textbook example of moralistic illusions effecting poor foreign policy choices. But Jefferson's America escaped a generation of devastating world conflict with few scratches, and no country emerged with gains that truly matched the Louisiana Purchase. The pattern continued, as a blundering, often racist foreign policy allowed the United States to expand to the Pacific Ocean and assert a hemispheric hegemony that endures to this day, overcoming the opposition of European powers that had larger armies and navies, better-organized policy-making, a more nuanced view of the world, and a less cumbersome political structure.



The pattern continued in the twentieth century. Historians—notably George F. Kennan—have justly excoriated the profound ignorance, moralism, and wishful thinking of American statesmen in the last century. A strong commitment to the European balance of power before World War I would probably have prevented that terrible conflict; Germany would have realized that a well-armed United States, prepared to support Britain and France, made victory impossible. Wilson's disastrous conduct at Versailles, the Washington establishment's equally contemptible failure to integrate the United States into the interwar global security system, the passive and mindless acquiescence in Franco-British containment of Hitler—America's contribution to the suffering of World War II is much greater than most of us even now are willing to acknowledge.

But, devastating and horrible as the two world wars were, the net result for the United States was surprisingly benign. We sustained serious casualties and we spent a lot of money, but Mr. Magoo suffered far less than either his allies or his enemies; indeed, economically, technologically, and politically, the United States emerged from both world wars stronger than when we entered them.

The cold war went much the same way. From the Berlin airlift to the fall of the Berlin Wall, American presidents from Truman to George H.W. Bush were criticized, often correctly, for policies that were by turns unsubtle, weak, ill-informed, inconsistent, and naïve. The United States blundered into the Korean war, and our involvement in Indochina comprised one long series of mistakes. Our Latin American policies were often not only shortsighted but self-defeating. In Africa, we managed to combine the worst of both worlds, supporting white apartheid South Africa while also supporting black dictators, like Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire. We supported the Shah in Iran against the moderate Mossadegh, with whom we might well have learned to work; and we abandoned the Shah in the face of the implacable enemies we face now.

All this and more happened during the cold war, but, at the end of the day, the United States won, and, once again, we emerged from the conflict as an economic and technological powerhouse.

Otto von Bismarck saw how American blunders led to American power and allegedly said that God has a special providence for drunks, fools, and the United States of America. That remark gave me the title for a book, *Special Providence*, in which I argued that American society has developed its own distinct method for conducting foreign policy. In a classic Bismarckian state, a single genius masters the complexities of the international system, calculates the national interest, and pursues it in a multidimensional chess game, matching his wits against the ministers of rival states. By contrast, in the American system, bureaucracies, parties, industry groups, advocacy organizations, ethnic lobbies, and others wrestle over foreign policy. We don't have a single pilot steering our ship of state; we have a brawl on the poop deck as everyone on board scrambles for the chance to get his or her hands on the wheel.

The result often looks messy but works reasonably well because, over time, the resulting foreign policy generally reflects the views and interests of American society as a whole.

But there is another dimension to our special providence, one that has come into greater prominence during the Bush administration. U.S. foreign policy isn't successful just because our process reflects the varied interests and priorities of our diverse and dynamic society. We also succeed because our core strategic interests—liberal society, global economic growth, geopolitical stability—fit well with the interests and aspirations of other people around the world. They remain popular even when U.S. policy is widely disliked; when we fail to achieve our goals, others often do the work for us.

The Bush administration has certainly put America's resilience to the test. Rarely has the national and international consensus about the shortcomings of U.S. foreign policy been so wide or so bitter. Rarely has a U.S. administration promised so much and achieved so little—as if Babe Ruth had pointed

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to the centerfield bleachers and then struck out. With poll after poll showing the United States plumbing the depths of unpopularity in key parts of the world; with U.S. pressure for elections on the West Bank and Gaza resulting in a victory for Hamas and a Palestinian civil war; with WMD undiscovered in Iraq, Iran on a roll, and Osama bin Laden on the loose, few would use the words "Mission Accomplished" to describe the Bush administration's foreign policy. Yet we will survive this presidency and likely prosper afterward. True, Bush's successor will inherit an ugly war in the Middle East, and American credibility and popularity have been damaged. But America's alliances remain strong, and the tides of history continue to flow our way. God does indeed have a special providence for the United States of America—even when it is led by George W. Bush.

Despite the best efforts of Donald "Old Europe" Rumsfeld, the transatlantic alliance has survived the Bush administration in remarkably good shape. The election victories of Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy have put pragmatists and pro-U.S. politicians in charge of the two largest EU members, and the gaps between the United States and Europe have perceptibly narrowed. On Iran, likely to be the thorniest issue the allies will face in the near term, European support for strong sanctions continues to grow, and both President Sarkozy and Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner have whispered that, if diplomacy fails, the alternative is war. Iran's behavior deeply troubles Europeans, not least because Iranian missiles can reach much of the EU.

In its second term, the Bush administration appears to have developed the elementary tact required to avoid gratuitously insulting our European allies, but the true forces driving the rapprochement have less to do with U.S. policy than with the realities of the outside world. Russia's crude mix of bluster and threats over exports of oil and gas has reminded Europeans across the continent that the United States is not the worst thing in the world—and has also exposed the naïveté and illusions of those who, like former German chancellor and current Gazprom hired gun Gerhard Schroeder, proposed that Russia was a reliable international partner. Angela Merkel has reminded Germans of their strong historical ties to Israel and their special responsibilities to world Jewry. European leaders, rebuffed by rapidly industrializing Asian countries on environmental issues, understand that, despite its opposition to the Kyoto Protocol, the United States is closer to core European environmental convictions than are growth-hungry emerging superpowers like China and India.

The rise of anti-American opinion across Europe, and especially in Germany and Turkey, is a deeply troubling development that the next administration will have to address. Both public and elite opinion will be more skeptical of American claims and quicker to question American leadership for some time to come. Nevertheless, it seems that, on balance, the leading European governments have decided that the United States, warts and all, remains Europe's best strategic partner in a dangerous world.

In Latin America, the United States has also survived the Bush administration with relatively little damage. Once again, this is not necessarily because Mr. Magoo knew what he was doing. If the Bush administration had not been bogged down in Iraq, it might have undertaken much more confrontational policies in the region. As it is, the United States has largely ignored various headline-grabbing provocations from the ankle-biting Hugo Chávez. Not even the progress of the Chávez steamroller into such strategically pointless countries as landlocked Bolivia and impoverished Nicaragua roused the administration into the self-defeating overreactions that Fidel Castro can still routinely elicit. In the absence of polarizing U.S. policy, the two major players in contemporary Latin America—Mexico and Brazil—have distanced themselves from Chávez and continued the hard, slow work of institutional and economic modernization. Brazil's popular center-left president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has combined serious efforts to alleviate poverty with market-oriented economic reforms and tough anti-inflationary measures. The economy is growing, living standards of the poor are improving, Lula won reelection, and Latin America is now beginning to acquire something it has sorely lacked: a left-of-center political leadership able to combine its mission of serving the poor with a firm commitment to currency stability, the rule of law, and the development of a favorable business climate. Again, this is due more to Latin American choices than U.S. foresight; Lula's political program was developed in Brazil by Brazilians, not imposed on the country by the International Monetary Fund or Bush's Treasury Department.

Critics of American power like Chávez and Noam Chomsky believe that the U.S. system thrives on the poverty and marginalization of much of the world. In reality, U.S. interests are best served by the rise of stable, prosperous, middle-class societies. Despite U.S. policy failures in the 1990s, despite Bush's failure to advance the Free Trade Area of the Americas, despite his failure to deepen our relationship with Mexico, countries like Chile, Mexico, and Brazil continue to pursue market-driven economic policies that hasten the day when Latin America will be as boring and bourgeois as Europe. The strategic interests of the United States benefit from a peaceful and prosperous Latin America; this is also what most Latin Americans want for themselves.

Mr. Magoo has also done reasonably well in sub-Saharan Africa. The rise of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity across much of the region has created substantial reservoirs of pro-American sentiment. Since 1900, the number of Christians in Africa has exploded from less than ten million to almost 400 million, with most of this growth coming in the last 50 years. Since the 1950s, Christians have doubled as a percentage of the population in Nigeria, sub-Saharan Africa's most populous and most energy-rich country. A recent poll showed that a majority of Nigerian Christians support both the U.S.-led war on terrorism and the state of Israel. Overall, 51 percent of Nigerians—Christian and Muslim—told pollsters last summer that it was a good thing that American ideas and customs are spreading in Nigeria, and 75 percent saw the United States as an important source of democratic values. Although plagued by election fraud, Nigeria has just witnessed its first democratic change of power from one elected leader to another since independence.

There are tentative but hopeful signs of progress across the region. While the antics of Robert Mugabe and the agony of Zimbabwe dominate the headlines, many African countries are moving toward economic and political reform. The average rate of economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa has been around 5 percent for the last three years and is approaching the 7 percent rate of growth that would put the continent on the road to a rapid reduction in its poverty rate. Rwanda's post-genocide government is working closely with public and private U.S. interests to accelerate

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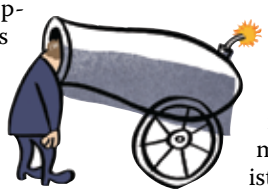
economic development. Kenya's emerging democracy is rowdy and robust.

The basis for a new U.S. policy in Africa stands on two legs: a growing appreciation of the importance of the continent's energy resources to the United States and the growing ties developing between African and American Christians—especially conservative ones like the American Episcopalians, who have turned to bishops from Rwanda and Nigeria for support in their fight against the ordination of gay bishops. Evangelicals formed a key element of the political coalitions that won substantial increases in U.S. development aid to Africa during the Bush years, and, with the active engagement of both black and white megachurch and denominational leaders, evangelical and Pentecostal links with Africa are rapidly growing.

The linkage of oil and energy firms with evangelical Christians will be an odd and sometimes tense pairing of forces in American politics, and it will cause problems as well as solve them—for example, among sub-Saharan Africa's many Muslims. But, even if U.S. policy toward Africa is sometimes wrongheaded—and history suggests that it often will be—the strengthening of economic and civil society ties and the establishment of what I believe will be long-term bipartisan support to increase U.S. aid to Africa will probably succeed in cementing relations between the United States and the world's second-largest and second-most populous continent, promoting its integration into the global political and economic system.

Mr. Magoo faces his sternest long-term tests in Asia. As Henry Kissinger tells us, from the standpoint of history, the unification of Germany is more important than the rise of the European Union, the fall of the Soviet Union is more important than the unification of Germany, and the rise of India and China is more important than the fall of the Soviet Union. So earthshaking is the rise of Asia that many analysts believe that the end of America's global power is likely to come from an emerging Asian superpower—the most likely candidate being China.

The future holds many surprises, and nothing can be ruled out, but the rise of Asia does not necessarily entail an American decline. In fact, the United States seems less likely to be marginalized by rising Asian powers today than it did in 2001. The administration's policy has not always been brilliant, and there have been some significant wobbles, but, on the whole, this is the part of the world where Bush's foreign policy record is strongest. The United States has better relations with virtually every significant Asian power today than it did in 2001. The Bush administration has successfully strengthened U.S.-Japan ties without causing a crisis with China; it has stepped up cooperation on a number of fronts with both India and Pakistan; it has continued to support the emergence of democracy in Indonesia, the country with the world's largest Muslim population; and it has prevented Taiwan from derailing our increasingly smooth relationship with Beijing. While the North Korean nuclear problem has not been fully resolved, the United States has used the crisis to lay the foundations for consensus among the great powers in a vital part of the world.



However, once again the main forces protecting U.S. interests in the region have less to do with the wisdom of U.S. foreign policy than with the way that the region is developing on its own. The rise of Asia is a much broader and more benign phenomenon than the rise of China alone would be. The Asia of the twenty-first century looks more and more like a multipolar region too big and too complex for any single country, even China, to dominate. With India as a second nuclear-armed superpower home to more than a billion people, with Japan enduring as a major economic and political force, and with the healthy and rapid development of substantial regional powers like Australia, Vietnam, and Indonesia, Asia is more likely to contain many important regional powers and superpowers, rather than fall under a single, dominant power.

Moreover, Asia's economic development tends to reduce anti-Americanism in the region and promote the idea that peaceful cooperation with the American-led world order is the key to growth. In India, China, Vietnam, and other Asian countries, millions of ordinary people know that their newfound prosperity stems from trade with the United States. As long as that holds true, American relations with the Asian superpowers and their neighbors are likely to improve.

In the Middle East and central Asia, where disaster has struck in the form of two difficult wars, bad policy has not only ruined the Bush administration and perhaps the Republican Party, it has weakened U.S. foreign policy more than any event since the Vietnam war. With nearly 4,000 U.S. military deaths and Iraqi fatalities at least 20 times that number, the authors of the Iraq war cannot escape a historical reckoning. Combined with the economic, political, and opportunity costs, the bill is a heavy one. If one adds the abortive break with conservative Arab governments in an ill-considered dash for democracy, the failure to restart the Israeli-Palestinian peace process so catastrophically derailed in the last months of the Clinton administration, the failure to detach Syria from Iran, and the poorly judged support for Israel's bungled war with Hezbollah, U.S. foreign policy in the vital and volatile Middle East has been a spectacle of extraordinary failure. The United States has never been so hated in the region; radical forms of Islam have never been so popular.

Yet, even in the Middle East, it appears that the consequences are less dire than we deserve. Administration policy, for example, has been widely criticized for increasing Iranian power in the region. This is true, and the looming confrontation with Iran is the most serious item on the current political agenda; yet, at the same time, the perceived threat from Iran has caused conservative Sunni Arab regimes, led by the Saudis, to tighten their links with the United States and even to edge closer toward normalizing relations with Israel. In recent months, the Saudis have supported moves to reopen peace talks with Israel, renewed their conditional offer to recognize the Jewish state, and deepened their strategic links with the United States by moving toward one of the largest arms deals in history.

Even in Iraq itself, the United States has made significant alliances with Sunni Arab tribal leaders, who played an important role in both the nationalist and the jihadist resistance to coalition forces after Saddam's fall. Those alliances are the basis for the recent U.S. military successes in Iraq, and Sunni participation in the Iraqi political process is enhancing the prospects for the kind of compromise, however ugly, that could keep Iraq from falling into Iran's orbit while enhancing stability as U.S. forces gradually withdraw.

Once again, it is neither the moral beauty nor the practical wisdom of U.S. policy that recommends us to these new allies. It is their perception that we are their allies against something even worse. Among Sunni Arabs in Iraq, that something worse is not only the domination of Iraq by revenge-minded radical Shia parties and militias linked to Iran but the

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domination of the fanatical (and increasingly foreign) jihadis.

There is more good news. The same polls that demonstrate the widespread unpopularity of the United States show a major shift in Muslim opinion away from terrorism and the ideas of Al Qaeda. Terrorism in Iraq—where the victims are almost always Arab Muslims, and many are women and children—may have made the horror and inhumanity of such attacks apparent to mass audiences throughout the Arab world. In seven of eight Muslim countries surveyed in one study, the proportion of the population that considers suicide bombing a legitimate tactic has fallen. In 2002, 33 percent of Pakistanis told pollsters that suicide bombing was often or sometimes justified; by 2007, only 9 percent held that point of view. Seven of seven Muslim countries surveyed showed declines in the proportion of the population that had confidence in Osama bin Laden.

Although the bungled occupation has obscured this, the U.S. position in the region continues to benefit from Saddam's ouster. Since the 1950s, U.S. policy in the Middle East has been aimed at preventing two things: We have tried to keep any other outside power from dominating the region, and we have tried to prevent any single regional power or leader from dominating the sensitive Gulf. This meant, among other things, that the United States has consistently opposed the Arab leaders and movements who sought to unite the Arab peoples into a single political entity. American unpopularity in the region is based not only on our support for Israel; it is based on the (accurate) perception that our support for Israel has been part of a much larger policy of containing Arab nationalism.

The Arab nationalist dream was always unrealistic, but the idea of a single people in a single state under a single leader dominated the political culture of Arab nationalism from the time of Nasser through the fall of Saddam. The end of Saddam Hussein and the rise of the Iraqi Shia signals a change in Arab politics whose impact will reverberate and grow through the coming years. The Shia Arabs of Iraq, and, indeed, on both sides of the Persian Gulf, are an important if historically ignored and marginalized part of the Arab people. Now that the Shia have assumed control of their own political destiny, any serious future movements toward Arab unity must be based on a deeper understanding and acceptance of the diversity of Arab identity and experience.

The importance of this development for the future of U.S.-Arab relations may well outweigh other consequences of the war in Iraq. While the United States has been unalterably opposed to the aspiring Bismarcks of the Arab world, perhaps we can now support any Jean Monnet–like figures seeking to help the Arab world's many nations and peoples find a suitable international expression for their common identity. The United States played a substantial role in encouraging the birth of what became the European Union; we can now begin to look for ways of assisting rather than opposing Arab dreams.

This is an analysis of power, not a defense of failure. Had the Bush administration made different choices at key points, both the United States and the world would be much better off than they are. But, fortunately or unfortunately, the foundations of American power have less to do with the wisdom of particular policies than with the way that the priorities of American society and the strategic requirements of American power intersect with the realities of international life. It is not how smart we are; it is how well we fit.

The role that we play in the world today is very similar to the role that the British played in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—and which the Dutch were beginning to play as early as the seventeenth. All three built an open society at home based on religious tolerance, economic and political freedom, and the rule of law. All three developed worldwide trading interests and supported these interests by building navies that could maintain order on key sea routes. They then used the wealth from this international trading system to support a balance of power, seeking to prevent any hostile land power from gaining the kind of regional supremacy that would allow such a power to build a navy strong enough to contest control of the seas. For the British in the nineteenth century and the Americans over the last 100 years, that "maritime system" of trading and sea power had another dimension. In peace, other countries were able to participate in the system, integrating their economies into the emerging global networks. This kept, and keeps, many countries on good terms with the leading powers of the maritime system, but, should war come, the British and the Americans could deny the resources and finance of the global networks to their opponents. Finally, both the British and the Americans have promoted the spread of liberal institutions (if not always democracy) among other countries. Such institutions (the rule of law, independent central banks, protections for civil liberties and private property) make the maritime system more profitable for Anglo-Americans, provide ideological justification and a "higher purpose" for their power—and enable the countries who adopt them to compete more successfully in the global economy.

This system is incredibly strong. Either Britain or the United States has won every major international conflict since the end of the seventeenth century. Spain, France, Germany, Japan, the Soviet Union—every great power that has challenged the system has gone down in defeat.

As it happens, this grand strategy meshes well with America's abilities and priorities. It is the openness and dynamism of our society, more than the clever economic policies of the government, that give U.S. corporations the technology, organizational skills, and financial acumen that make them such formidable and profitable global entities. The rapid growth of American commerce—and missionary endeavors—created a strong public demand at home for U.S. forces, naval and otherwise, that could protect Americans in their overseas activities. The gradual decline of the British Empire forced Americans, much against their will, to pick up the old British global role and adapt the system for our purposes. The inclusion of other countries in the economic system is so obviously in our own economic interest that powerful lobbies push the government to build the U.S. trading network into an ever-growing global economic network—and the promotion of liberal values abroad meshes with the priorities of American business and American philanthropic idealism.

We do not always execute this grand strategy well, and we have rarely been fully conscious of what we are doing. But the strategy fits the interests and the ideals of the American people so well that we can follow it in our sleep. We blunder forward even when we can't see where we are going—exactly like Mr. Magoo. ◆

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Myths About Israel and the Middle East (1)

Do the media feed us fiction, instead of fact?

We all know that, by dint of constant repetition, white can be made to appear black, good can get transformed into evil, and myth may take the place of reality. Israel, with roughly one-thousandth of the world's population and with a similar fraction of the territory of this planet, seems to engage a totally disproportionate attention of the print and broadcast media of the world. Unfortunately, much of what the media tell us — in reporting, editorializing in columns, and in analysis — are endlessly repeated myths.

What are the facts?

■ **Myth:** The "Palestinians" are a nation and therefore deserving of a homeland.

Reality: The concept of Palestinian nationhood is a new one and had not been heard of until after the Six-Day War (1967), when Israel, by its victory, came into the administration of the territories of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip. The so-called "Palestinians" are no more different from the Arabs living in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, than Wisconsinites are from Iowans.

■ **Myth:** Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip are "occupied Arab territory."

Reality: All of "Palestine" — east and west of the Jordan River — was part of the League of Nations mandate. Under the Balfour Declaration, all of it was to be the "national home for the Jewish people." In violation of this mandate, Great Britain severed the entire area east of the Jordan River — about 75% of Palestine — and gave it to the Arabs, who created on it the kingdom of Transjordan. When Israel declared its independence in 1948, five Arab armies invaded the new country in order to destroy it at its very birth. They were defeated by the Israelis. The Transjordanians, however, remained in occupation of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and East Jerusalem. They proceeded to drive all Jews from those territories and to systematically destroy all Jewish houses of worship and other institutions. The Transjordanians (now renamed "Jordanians") were the occupiers for nineteen years. Israel regained these territories following its victory in the Six-Day War. Israel has returned the entire Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. The final status of the "West Bank" will be decided if and when the Palestinians will finally be able to sit down and seriously talk peace with Israel.

■ **Myth:** Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") are the "greatest obstacle to peace."

Reality: This is simply not correct, although it has been repeated so often that many have come to believe it. The greatest obstacle to peace is the intransigence and the irreconcilable hostility of the Arabs. Not more than 150,000 Jews are settled in these territories, living among about 1.4 million Arabs. How can Jews living there be an obstacle to peace? Why shouldn't they live there? About 1.2 million Arabs live in Israel proper. They are not an obstacle to peace. Neither the Israelis nor they themselves consider them as such.

> "Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!"

■ **Myth:** Israel is unwilling to yield "land for peace."

Reality: The concept that to the loser, rather than to the victor, belong the spoils is a radically new one, never before thought of in world history. Israel has emerged victorious in the five wars imposed on it by the Arabs. In order to make peace, it has returned over 90% of the territory occupied by it, specifically the vast Sinai Peninsula, to Egypt. That territory contained some of the most advanced military installations in the world, prosperous cities and settlements, and oil fields developed entirely by Israel that made it independent of petroleum imports. In the Camp David Accords, Israel agreed to autonomy for Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") with the permanent status to be determined after three years. But no responsible Palestinian representation has been available to negotiate with Israel about this.

All these myths (and others we shall talk about) have poisoned the atmosphere for decades. The root cause of the never-ending conflict is the unwillingness of the Arabs (and not just the Palestinians) to accept the reality of Israel. What a pity that those of the Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens have lived and continue to live in poverty, misery and ignorance. They could have chosen to accept the proposed partition of the country in 1947, would now have had their state alongside Israel for almost sixty years and could have lived in peace and prosperity. They could have kept hundreds of thousands of refugees in their homes and could have saved tens of thousands of lives. Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

DESIRE AND DECEIT

How good it is to know that Ang Lee is in the film world, working away. It's not only his range that attracts, amazing though it is, with films of a chef in Lee's native Taiwan, of a Jane Austen novel, of the American Civil War, and others. Lee's range is more than versatility. Each milieu is plumbed in its essences. Underlying his extraordinary gifts is, we feel, a belief that film exists in order to embrace varying humanities.

Lee's new film supports this view in an odd way, because it is not set in a country or culture far removed from his own. *Lust, Caution* takes place in the past—1942, 1938, 1941, then 1942 again—but it is Chinese. Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Shanghai (again) are the cities. The new element for Lee this time is not so much cultural: it is internal discovery. Lee based his picture on a short story of the same name by Eileen Chang, and, good as the story is, Lee improves it—at least he and his screenwriters have seen how the story needed to be redefined for cinema. Curiously, he risks a good deal by being faithful to the story in some particulars. By that fidelity the film of *Lust, Caution* asks some patience of us, but our patience pays off.

The story is set in the nexus of Chinese resistance to Japanese occupation in those years. (The similar cruelties going on elsewhere in the world are unmentioned but suggested.) The screen adaptation, by Lee's longtime associates Wang Hui Ling and James Schamus, centers on a young woman named Wong Chia Chi.

Chang, in the original story, concentrates on the bland surface of social events—the mah-jongg, the restaurants, the chitchat of the wives and women of the Chinese stooges who are collaborating with the Japanese oppressors. Vicious matters writhe along offstage, so to speak, implied but unseen—mostly commanded by the husband of the mah-jongg hostess. In Shanghai in 1942, Wong becomes the mistress of that husband, whose name is Yee. Wong is a member of a Chinese resistance group: her assignment is to become intimate with Yee so that she can lure him to a place where her friends will kill him. While this plan is in motion, the story flashes back—at length—to Wong's student days in Hong Kong, where Yee is then stationed. Wong joins the resistance group in Hong Kong, but the assassination plans are postponed when Yee is moved to Shanghai. Eventually the resistance group follows.

ANTHONY RUSSO

Much of the film glides along, like the story, on the glossy surface beneath which the group operates. Wong spends days playing mah-jongg with Mrs. Yee and other women. (The background of the story, the college days in Hong Kong involving student plays and a nascent love affair, are detailed in order to give Wong complexity.) In the story, Chang's focus on trifles makes us feel the imminence of something grave. That implicit gravity doesn't hover as effectually in the film, despite the assassins' meetings that we see. Thus, for the first hour or so, *Lust, Caution* lolls prettily in the mah-jongg lives of Mrs. Yee and her friends. The viewer can find himself wondering why Lee—the Lee we know—was interested in the subject.

Then comes the fulfillment of the story in a way that apparently was out of Chang's reach. In the story the eventual sex between Wong and Yee is mentioned almost peripherally. For Ang Lee the sexual scenes are the crux. Those scenes do much more than display what Chang only implied. They create a stronger being for the original story.

After Yee maneuvers Wong (as he thinks) into an affair, the several sex scenes are feverishly vivid. In the first of them we may initially get a bit impatient with the details. But those details include close-ups of Wong's face that show her submitting, for her purpose, to somewhat rough lovemaking by a man she loathes. However, in the sex scenes that follow, which are even rougher, the close-ups show Wong as a participant, not a victim.

LUST, CAUTION
Focus

SLEUTH
Sony Pictures Classics

This sexual melding leads to plot matters that I must not divulge. But I can note that Lee does not alter Chang's ending: he dramatizes it. Further: those sex scenes are among the very few such in films that are essential. Lee has perceived in Chang's story something that is only suggested there and that his film realizes—a cosmos of sensuality, a bonding by orgasm into a union beyond the world's protocols, whatever the cost may eventually be. In the recent French film *Lady Chatterley*, the director portrayed the loving passion of which sex is the evidence. In *Lust, Caution* Lee invokes the fright of being in such a cosmos without a scintilla of love.

Tang Wei, who plays Wong, makes her film debut here and does it with a conviction that is moving. The experienced Tony Leung, as Yee, rids the man of villainous cliché; Leung gives us a taciturn monster who is fast finding the banality in his evil. Can one congratulate two actors on the heat of their sex scenes? At least, we can sense their confidence in Ang Lee and his in them, and salute them all.

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Anthony Shaffer's play *Sleuth* has two characters, a young man and a middle-aged man. When the play was filmed in 1972, Michael Caine played the younger one. Patience, if that is what it was, has been rewarded: now Caine plays the older man.

Whoever makes a film of *Sleuth* is out for fun. The money motive is not exactly absent, but because of the level of trickery in *Sleuth*, the enterprise demands a yen for cleverness. The fact that there are only two characters is the tip-off. The virtual announcement of a duet early on launches the vaudeville-act atmosphere.

It all takes place in the luxurious home of a rich crime novelist, Andrew Wyke; the other man is his estranged wife's lover, Milo Tindle, an actor and hairdresser, who has come to see if Andrew will grant his wife a divorce. Andrew is very cordial, very invitingly conversational, so we know early on that some sort of game is afoot. Andrew's game, though he seems to accept his wife's affair, is to wreak vengeance on Milo. Milo, no dullard, scents this intent quickly but is nonetheless inveigled because of the bait that Andrew has put in place. (And the director, Kenneth Branagh, evokes with camera and actor movement an attar of possible homosexuality.)

All of the plot is slickly carpentered. (Well, a couple of glitches. For instance, why does Milo immediately believe Andrew's assurance of gain from the scheme he proposes?) But there is a bigger problem. I saw the first production of the play in New York as well as the 1972 film, and this new film hasn't cured—couldn't cure—the basic trouble. *Sleuth* goes on too long. Nimble though it is, the last quarter or so exists chiefly to tie up loose ends. The entertainment, which has been consistent up to then, lags.

Harold Pinter certainly knew all this when he agreed (before the Nobel Prize) to write the new screenplay. Nonetheless, the card-trick possibilities in the plot evidently amused him. He says that he had not seen *Sleuth* in either of its previous incarnations and had begun work only with the Shaffer script. Some of Pinter's plays, especially the short ones, float in a subtle abracadabra air, and that kinship was apparently enough to get him going. He does provide some silken trickery of his own, and the dialogue has Pinter characteristics—e.g., simple sentences cannily made ominous. But even if it had more of them, *Sleuth* would still not be Pinter. It is only about its story. In *echt* Pinter the story is the avenue to the subject.

Still, this film wants only to entertain, and other talents have gathered with Pinter to help. First among them is the designer Tim Harvey. The crime novelist has brought in technicians and electronic wizards to make his huge house a palace of remote-control dazzle. Walls glide in and out, an elevator functions, and video screens attest to almost everything—all at Andrew's touch of a small control he keeps in his pocket. This of course is Harvey's deviltry. Next is the cinematographer Haris Zambarloukos, who makes light gather and disappear as if divinities were brooding over the action. The very look of the film establishes that this is the right locale for well-machined trickery.

Michael Caine plays Andrew, who was played by Laurence Olivier when Caine was the younger man. I can't remember Caine's earlier performance with Shaffer's dialogue, but, appropriately aged, he is a perfect speaker of Pinterese. Caine, who has often been underrated as an acting talent, here reigns over the screen with sheer composure. Jude Law, the other man, has also suffered underpraise, usually because of his good looks. Oddly enough, the only dubious part of his performance here comes when his good looks are interfered with.

Lastly, and substantially, there is Branagh, the director. Not long ago HBO broadcast Branagh's film of *As You Like It*, which was unabatedly catastrophic. I watched it cringing. Branagh's *Henry V* and, to a great extent, his *Hamlet* had changed my views about Shakespeare on film, and now there was this seeming act of cowardice, this helter-skelter fear of really doing the play he was supposed to be doing. *Sleuth* does not present on film anything like the problems in Shakespeare, but it shows more smart invention, more implicit delight than that last bardic plunk. So perhaps the Shakespeare was only a regrettable gaffe in a bustling career. Branagh recently made a film of *The Magic Flute*. Lovers of Bergman's film and admirers of Branagh, like me, will hope. ◆

Richard Taruskin

THE MUSICAL MYSTIQUE

Defending classical music against its devotees.

I.

Last January, Gene Weingarten, a *Washington Post* columnist, persuaded the violinist Joshua Bell to join him in an experiment. Bell was to dress in jeans, a T-shirt, and a baseball cap, position himself at the head of the escalator in the L'Enfant Plaza subway station at the height of the morning rush hour, open his violin case, take out his $3.5 million Stradivarius, launch into Bach's D-minor Chaconne for solo violin, and see what happened.

Nothing much happened. People hurrying to work hurried by. Half a dozen or so, mainly those working in the station or early for appointments, listened for a little while and put some money in the open case. One passerby, a former violinist, knew the playing was superb and dropped a five. Another recognized the performer and dropped a twenty.

But of course it was hardly an experiment. All concerned knew perfectly well that people at rush hour are preoccupied with other things than arts and leisure, and would not break their stride. But the fulfillment of the self-fulfilling prophecy gave Weingarten the pretext he sought, in an article titled "Pearls Before Breakfast," to cluck and tut, to quote Kant and Tocqueville, and to carry on as if now we knew what really happened at Abu Ghraib.

Bloggers took up the refrain. Notice, wrote one, that "all the children wanted to stop and listen. They knew. But their parents kept them moving on. Sadly it reminds me of an occasion when children wanted to stop and listen to Christ but his disciples didn't let them." Saddest for me was that the weblist of the American Musicological Society, my professional organization, added its meed of clucking and cackling. Scholars are supposed to be skeptical of spin and pose, but here we were piling on. My hat goes off to one

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Ben H., a netizen who saw through it all. "Perhaps the Post could do a whole series of articles about philistines ignoring Joshua Bell's sublime music-making in different locations," he suggested:

1. Outside a burning building (not one fireman stopped to listen!)
2. At a car crash site (one paramedic actually pushed him aside!)
3. During a graduation exam (shushed by the invigilators!)
4. At a school play (thrown out by angry parents!)
5. On an airport runway (passing jet liners seemed oblivious!)

In one respect, though, the caper was instructive. It offered answers to those who wonder why classical music now finds itself friendless in its moment of self-perceived crisis—a long moment that has given rise in recent years to a whole literature of elegy and jeremiad. These three books, by self-appointed counsels for the defense, constitute one of its subgenres. Others have argued the case for the prosecution. Their books include *Who Killed Classical Music? Maestros, Managers, and Corporate Politics* by Norman Lebrecht, a sloppy but entertaining British muckraker; *Classical Music in America: A History of Its Rise and Fall* by Joseph Horowitz, the latest version of a book that Horowitz has written several times by now, beginning with *Understanding Toscanini* in 1987; and *Mozart in the Jungle: Sex, Drugs, and Classical Music* by Blair Tindall, a journalist and recovering oboist, which despite a pandering title actually contains the smartest and most constructive take on the situation.

WHO NEEDS CLASSICAL MUSIC? CULTURAL CHOICE AND MUSICAL VALUE
By Julian Johnson
(Oxford University Press, 140 pp., $25)

CLASSICAL MUSIC, WHY BOTHER? HEARING THE WORLD OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURE THROUGH A COMPOSER'S EARS
By Joshua Fineberg
(Routledge, 162 pp., $21.95)

WHY CLASSICAL MUSIC STILL MATTERS
By Lawrence Kramer
(University of California Press, 242 pp., $24.95)

What makes the classical music crisis suddenly newsworthy is itself a question worth asking. When has the place of classical music in modern society ever been secure? Reviewing Lawrence Kramer's book in *The New York Times,* Edward Rothstein shrewdly observed that it might have appeared decades ago, but then it would have had a title more like "Why Contemporary Composers Don't Matter" or "Why Audiences Are Stuck in the Past." This is a weatherbeaten complaint, and one that no longer seems worth debating. To quote Pieter van der Merwe, a South African music historian, "for the general public, 'classical music' belongs mainly to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, carries on with rapidly diminishing vigor into the first few decades of the twentieth, and has ceased to exist by 1950." The difference is that the irrelevance to concert audiences of contemporary music now seems to be merely a special case of a problem facing the classical field as a whole. Doubts have widened, and Rothstein admits that he has come to share them. "Though I once tended to whine about its problems with cranky optimism, now even a stunning performance seems like a spray of flowers at a funeral."

If a supporter as staunch as Rothstein, who served as the classical-music maven for this magazine before briefly assuming the post of chief classical critic for the *Times*, can fall away, you surely see why I speak of friendlessness. Classical music has itself (among others) to blame for the quandary that it now faces, and I see the reason epitomized in *The Washington Post*'s disgusting "experiment" with Bell the busker. The discourse that supported its old prestige has lost its credibility. As with rising gorge I consumed these books, the question that throbbed and pounded in my head was whether it was still possible to defend my beloved repertoire without recourse to pious tommyrot, double standards, false dichotomies, smug nostalgia, utopian delusions, social snobbery, tautology, hypocrisy, trivialization, pretense, innuendo, reactionary invective, or imperial haberdashery.

On the evidence before me, the answer is no. The discourse supporting classical music so reeks of historical blindness and sanctimonious self-regard as to render the object of its ministrations practically indefensible. Belief in its indispensability, or in its cultural superiority, is by now unrecoverable, and those who mount such arguments on its behalf morally indict themselves. Which is not to say that classical music, or any music, is morally reprehensible. Only people, not music, can be that. What *is* reprehensible is to see its cause as right against some wrong. What is destroying the credibility of classical music is an unacknowledged or misperceived collision of rights. The only defense classical music needs, and the only one that has any hope of succeeding, is the defense of classical music (in the words of T. W. Adorno, a premier offender) against its devotees.

II.

It would take a book—Joseph Horowitz's book, or Lawrence Levine's widely cited *Highbrow/Lowbrow*—to account for the cultural clout that classical music managed to acquire in such unlikely terrain as postbellum America; although maybe it is not such a riddle after all that the traditionally "high" musical genres should have amassed unassailable cultural capital in the "gilded" age of intensely concentrated wealth and increasing social stratification. Nor is it easy to describe the terms of its prestige in the period of its American ascendancy. It does have one rough and readily observable measure, though: the cultural prestige of an art medium can be calculated according to the extent to which there is perceived social advantage in claiming (or feigning) an appreciation of it.

By that standard, one can demonstrate that the high plateau of public esteem that classical music reached in America in the 1880s (the decade that saw the founding of the Boston Symphony and the Metropolitan Opera) lasted through the Depression (when the Works Progress Administration was called in to rescue it), and the Good War, and into the Eisenhower decade; and that its decline thereafter was precipitous. In the fall of 1956, when Eisenhower was running for re-election, RCA Victor issued a long-playing disc called *The President's Favorite Music*, consisting of a selection of items from the firm's backlist, a cover photo that is evidently an official White House portrait of the grinning occupant seated at his desk with the First Lady by his side, and a back cover containing a sort of benediction, signed with a facsimile of the president's handwriting, celebrating the role of musicians and of music in his life and in the life of the nation. The musical selections include some that had plausible connections with Eisenhower, like Dmitri Tiomkin's title theme for *High Noon*, as well as inspirational numbers such as Marian Anderson singing "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" and Leopold Stokowski's arrangement of Bach's "Sheep May Safely Graze" (a paean not to the deity but to wise political leadership). But the bulk of

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the president's musical offering consists of three orchestral overtures: Beethoven's *Coriolan* (originally written to accompany a German tragedy, as the producers of the album had surely forgotten, about unwise political leadership), Mendelssohn's *Fingal's Cave*, and Strauss's *Fledermaus*. I have no idea how much actual input Eisenhower had in the planning of this record, but it does not matter. What matters is that identification with classical music was considered, by him or his handlers as much as by the record folks, to be a significant enhancer of his image.

Even better proof that classical music consumption was seen as a political asset, as an admirable personal quality, came during the next election season. In 1960, *Time* magazine reported on the musical tastes of the major-party candidates for president and vice president, as ascertained by Paul Hume, the music critic of *The Washington Post* (whose main claim to fame was a contretemps with President Truman over his review of First Daughter Margaret's recital debut). John F. Kennedy responded to Hume's inquiry through his wife, who sent a letter listing Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun*, Ravel's *La Valse*, the overture to Berlioz's *Benvenuto Cellini*, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*, and the Polovetsian Dances from Borodin's *Prince Igor*. (I am pretty sure that this Franco-Russian repertoire reflected the future First Lady's taste. While a junior at George Washington University studying in Paris, Jacqueline Bouvier had won a *Vogue* magazine essay contest on "People I Wish I Had Known" with an entry on Oscar Wilde, Charles Baudelaire, and—most germane—Serge de Diaghilev. When Stravinsky heard about this list from President Kennedy at a White House dinner, he concluded that she had been researching pederasty.)

Richard Nixon confessed to *Time* that his sentimental favorites were *Oklahoma!* ("because it was the first show that he and Pat saw after moving to Washington") and Mexican folk songs ("because they reminded him of his honeymoon south of the border"), but he still complied with Hume's request for a classical choice, and cited Chaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. Lyndon Johnson put himself down as "an indiscriminate admirer of Strauss waltzes." Henry Cabot Lodge, the true patrician in the company, named Mozart's Clarinet Quintet, K. 581 (he gave the Köchel number), alongside Handel's *Messiah* and (the noblesse oblige concession) recordings by the Dukes of Dixieland. (His wife added Bach's Suite No. 3 for Unaccompanied Cello, but only if "performed by Pablo Casals.")

And now? I learn from Joshua Fineberg's *Classical Music, Why Bother?* that George Herbert Walker Bush, every bit as much of a patrician as Henry Cabot Lodge, "was known to prefer the Beach Boys to the Philharmonic and saw no need to pretend a love for high culture." From Richard H. Solomon's *Chinese Political Negotiating Behavior, 1967–1984*, I learn that when Gerald Ford visited the People's Republic of China in 1975, his hosts made discreet inquiries as to what music he would like to be entertained with. It turned out to be the University of Michigan football song, "Hail to the Victors." (They goofed and played Michigan State's fight song instead.) When it was Vice President Walter Mondale's turn to visit in 1979, "the Chinese delighted their guest by playing his favorite songs from 'The Sound of Music' but left him most impressed with the degree of manipulation they were prepared to resort to in order to make a positive impression."

Fineberg takes a sour Spenglerian view of this devolution, and with startling fatuousness he blames it on a late-blooming "misreading" of Dada's (yes, Cage's and Duchamp's) "attacks on the artistic status quo." But what actually happened was more like a *trahison des clercs*—a defection of intellectuals to pop culture that was a by-product of the social and cultural turbulence of the 1960s. The first symptoms in music took the form of regal welcomes to the Beatles from conspicuously placed mandarins. First there was William Mann, the chief music reviewer (which in those days, it went without saying, meant classical music reviewer) for *The Times of London*, and his surprise nomination of John Lennon and Paul McCartney as the outstanding new composers of 1963.

Then, far more decisively, came Ned Rorem, a well-known if not yet celebrated American composer with a recognized specialty in art songs, seething with resentment against an academic establishment, then dominated by twelve-tone composers, that despised him. Rorem contributed an essay called "The Music of the Beatles" to the four-year-old but already august *New York Review of Books*. It appeared early in the fateful year 1968, and began with a remarkable salvo: "I never go to classical concerts anymore, and I don't know anyone who does." Along the way there were yummy stinkbombs such as this. "There *are* still people who exclaim: 'What's a nice musician like you putting us on about The Beatles for?' They are the same ones who at this late date take theater more seriously than movies and go to symphony concerts because pop insults their intelligence, unaware that the situation is now precisely reversed." (Between Mann and Rorem the boys from Liverpool were inducted into formal academic criticism via Richard Poirier's "Learning from the Beatles" in *Partisan Review*, replete with the mandatory dissertation prologue proclaiming that everyone who has written about this subject before the author is a dunce.)

Mann compared the Beatles to Mahler, Rorem to Poulenc (and Poirier—yep—to T. S. Eliot). That sort of hype looks quaint now, because soon enough there were highly educated critics aplenty who could write expertly about rock and other popular genres, and about their histories, without having to validate them with comparisons to canonical greats. This new breed of critic emerged first in "alternative" newspapers and samizdat fanzines, of which *Crawdaddy!*, originally a mimeographed sheet with a print run of five hundred, was the first. In an early essay from *Crawdaddy!* called "The Aesthetics of Rock," later widely anthologized and expanded into a book, Richard Meltzer (then a philosophy major at SUNY Stony Brook) gave the flavor of this new pop criticism. The essay ranged from James Joyce to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* to Lennon and McCartney to Andy Warhol to Bob Dylan, winding up with W. V. Quine. The idea that someone who read Hegel and Quine would seek musical fulfillment in McCartney rather than Webern was new, and it was very threatening to established authorities such as Milton Babbitt, who complained, in an interview published in 1979, that "we receive brilliant, privileged freshmen at Princeton, who in their first year of college are likely to take a philosophy of science course with [logical positivist] Carl Hempel, and then return to their dormitories to play the same records that the least literate members of our society embrace as the only relevant music." Pierre Bourdieu, were you listening? This came very close to enunciating as an explicit program the tacit view of art as a producer of social distinction that the Joshua Bell "experiment" reinforced.

Babbitt's complaint came much too late to matter. Since the "British invasion," nearly half a century ago, it has been socially acceptable, even fashionable, for intellectuals to pay attention primarily to commercial music, and they often seem oblivious to the very existence of other genres. Of no other art medium is this true. Intellectuals in America distinguish between commercial and "literary" fiction, between commercial and

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"fine" art, between mass-market and "art" cinema. But the distinction in music is no longer drawn, except by professionals. Nowadays most educated persons maintain a lifelong fealty to the popular groups they embraced as adolescents, and generation gaps between parents and children now manifest themselves musically in contests between rock styles.

Of course professionals can be just as oblivious, and they look funnier, since they are blind not to a blip but to the main picture. I had a grim laugh when I read an interview in *The New York Times* this past July with George Benjamin, a forty-seven-year-old British composer, in town for the American première of a chamber opera that he had written. He was pulling the usual long face about the fact that music "is not valued in contemporary society." He challenged the reporter interviewing him to "name a single politician who shows interest in the music of our time." This was only days after the *Times* had published an interview with John Edwards in which the candidate spoke enthusiastically about U2, Bruce Springsteen, and Dave Matthews. Poppy Bush, as we have noted, is into the Beach Boys. Bill Clinton, the most musical of our recent presidents, claimed no identification with the classics; he and his wife even named their daughter after a Joni Mitchell song. But while his musical attitudes might not console George Benjamin, they do attest to an authentic involvement with the music of our time, and I for one rate our sax-toting president's participatory investment in music higher than anyone's passive consumption of the classics, to say nothing of the previously expected feigning of cultivated taste. Such authenticity is a positive change in our culture, connected to the generally enhanced level of seriousness with which America has been taking its professed social egalitarianism since the 1960s. Can classical music fit into that?

One would not think so, to judge by all the cutting back now going on. The big news this summer was the elimination or downgrading of classical music reviewing in the nation's newspapers and general-interest magazines. The *Chicago Sun-Times* and the Minneapolis *Star-Tribune* eliminated their classical critics by buying them out and retiring their positions. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* demoted its critic to the status of a feature writer. The biggest story concerned *New York* magazine's Peter G. Davis, a veteran critic who once worked for the *Times* and is widely esteemed as a connoisseur of opera and singing. He was replaced, against his will, by Justin Davidson (formerly of *Newsday*), who will cover architecture as well as music. But although it made headlines this year, this development has long been in progress. The beat of this magazine's masthead music critic has gone over from classical to pop. *The Atlantic* once had a classical record column and for a while regularly printed excellent essays on classical music by the composer David Schiff, but now it spurns the topic. *The Nation* used to let Edward Said play at classical reviewing, but now covers only pop and jazz with regularity.

Nor are print media the only, or even the most important, venue to suffer spectacular cutbacks. Classical radio stations have dropped like flies. New York has been a one-classical-station town since 1993, the San Francisco Bay Area since 1994. The Metropolitan Opera lost its national broadcast sponsor in 1987 as a result of the collapse of oil prices, and its broadcasts are now funded catch-as-catch-can. The Bay Area, home of the second most prestigious opera company in America, no longer receives them because no local sponsor finds them profitable, and the one remaining classical station, being a default monopoly, can afford to flout its opera-loving listeners. The collapse of big-ticket classical recording is also an old story (though hardy indie labels such as Naxos, with low over-

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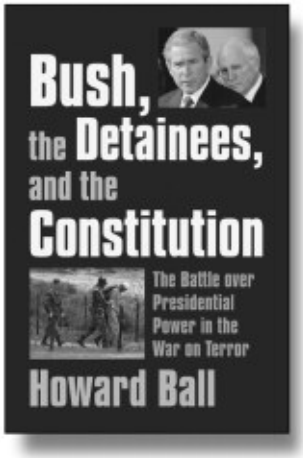

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heads, are still bucking the trend). Tower Records is gone, and classical CD sales mostly take place online. Most orchestras are now without major-label contracts. Some of them, like the San Francisco Symphony, have gone into samizdat. In sum: classical music is now generally regarded not as a common cultural heritage (except, perhaps, at funerals) but as an upscale niche product.

But the present collapse looks more dramatic than it really is, if that is any consolation. It follows a period of enthusiastic but unsustainable growth that coincided, ironically enough, precisely with the inauspicious changes in consumption patterns just surveyed—a testimony to the triumph of romanticism over realism in our musical culture. (This is the story that Tindall's book tells especially vividly, because its author is an angry victim of the bubble's burst.) It was only since the 1960s, the very decade when the prestige of classical music began losing ground, that most orchestras instituted year-round seasons. Professional arts education also ballooned in that decade: among the institutions founded at the time were the California Institute of the Arts and the North Carolina School of the Arts, the latter the first state-supported school of its kind. Lincoln Center, dedicated by Eisenhower in 1959, opened its first doors, to Philharmonic Hall (now Avery Fisher Hall), in 1962. Spurred by the Cold War (which turned Van Cliburn's 1958 victory at the first Chaikovsky Competition in Moscow into a geopolitical triumph) and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society agenda, the federal government itself took up the task of arts funding—not as a bailout, as in the Depression, but in the expectation that increased supply would increase demand. Johnson's National Council on the Arts led directly to the establishment the next year, in 1965, of the National Endowment for the Arts. The high-water mark for federal arts funding was reached under Nixon ("the NEA's messiah," in Tindall's words), who ratcheted its budget up to $40 million in 1971. By then, the New York State Council on the Arts, founded under the aegis of Nelson Rockefeller, a seasoned patron of the arts, had been in business for a decade.

Especially in New York, then, the period roughly from the founding of Lincoln Center to Black Monday in 1987 was a golden age for art producers. Major organizations used public subsidies to supplement private donations and vastly improve the working conditions of their employees. Tiny groups, including several in which I then participated as a performing musician, proliferated. And I have not even mentioned the corporate foundations, which also mushroomed both in number and in lavishness of largesse. The Ford Foundation, the biggest one pre-Gates, had been founded in 1936 to "strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation and advance human achievement." It took up the cause of the arts, including classical music, in the late 1950s. The Rockefeller Foundation, a much older organization, got on the arts bandwagon in connection with Lincoln Center. In the 1980s, the big name was Citicorp. During this period, as Tindall comments, "most performing arts groups were subsidized by unearned donated income, as well as tax incentives, and therefore did not always have to link revenue to the quantity, quality, or type of product they offered."

As long as this gravy train lasted, the attrition of the audience could be overlooked. The result of living for three decades in a fool's paradise was a vast overpopulation of classical musicians as many more were trained, and briefly employed, than a market economy could bear. The cutbacks that seemed to imply the sudden cruel rejection of classical music were really more in the nature of a market correction, reflecting the present scarcity of patronage and a long-deferred confrontation with the changed realities of demand.

III.

There are two ways of dealing with the new pressure that classical music go out and earn its living. One is accommodation, which can entail painful losses and suffer from its own excesses (the "dumbing down" that everybody except management deplores). Blair Tindall's main grievance is the inadequate education she received at the North Carolina School of the Arts, which left her unskilled for other work. Her accommodation consisted of retraining as a journalist. Orchestras have accommodated by modifying their programming in a fashion that favors the Itzies and Pinkies and little divas. Composers have accommodated by adopting more "accessible" styles. Love it or hate it, such accommodation is a normal part of the evolutionary history of any art.

The other way is to hole up in such sanctuary as still exists and hurl imprecations and exhortations. That is the path of resistance to change and defense of the status quo, and it is the path chosen by the authors of the books under review here. The status quo in question, by now a veritable mummy, is the German romanticism that still reigns in many academic precincts, for the academy is the one area of musical life that can still effectively insulate its transient denizens (students) and luckier permanent residents (faculty) from the vagaries of the market. Inevitably, all three authors are professors. In its strongest and most "uncompromising" form, the heritage of German romanticism is the ideology of modernism, and it is again no surprise to learn that two of the authors are composers who write in academically protected styles. (The third, Kramer, is also a dabbler in composition, but that is not his main profession.) Despite their obvious self-interest, they claim to be offering disinterested commentary and propounding universal values.

These values are now a little more than two centuries old, deriving from a discourse that originated with Moses Mendelssohn and Immanuel Kant in the late eighteenth century, made its first beachhead on musical terrain in the work of E. T. A. Hoffmann in the first decade of the nineteenth century, reached an apogee with Schopenhauer, and had Adorno, who died in 1969, as its last authentic apostle. Although it began as an ethnocentric creed and continues to have German epigones, its chief bastion is now the Anglophone academy. (When I vented a rather vehement anti-Adornian position, somewhat along the lines of what will follow here, before a German audience in Berlin last year and encountered surprisingly little resistance, I asked one of my hosts about it and was told, "Oh my dear, Adorno is your problem now.")

The main tenet of the creed is the defense of the autonomy of the human subject as manifested in art that is created out of a purely aesthetic, hence disinterested, impulse. Such art is without utilitarian purpose (although, as Kant famously insisted, it is "purposive"), but it serves as the symbolic embodiment of human freedom and as the vehicle of transcendent metaphysical experience. This is the most asocial definition of artistic value ever promulgated. Artists, responsible to themselves alone, provide a model of human self-realization. All social demands on the artist—whether made by church, state, or paying public—and all social or commercial mediation are inimical to the authenticity of the creative product.

Belief in the transcendent human value of creative labor has always invested German romantic aesthetics with the trappings of a secular or humanistic religion. In the twentieth century, such a theory of art could be seen as a bulwark against totalitarianism. Adorno held it up as a coun-

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terforce also to the instrumentalizing and rationalizing tendencies of "administered" capitalist society, which turns human subjects into objects of economic exploitation. Since he was trained in music, he held up classical music in its least compromising forms (epitomized in the famously esoteric work of Arnold Schoenberg) as the chief example of "truth-bearing" art, as opposed to the dehumanizing popular music churned out by the culture industry for mass dissemination.

Skeptics of this viewpoint, while often appreciating the loftiness of its aspirations, have pointed to the ease with which high ideals can shade into complacency, autonomy into irrelevance, and disinterestedness into indifference. My admittedly tendentious diction ("serve," "vehicle") signals my own skepticism as to the genuineness of its disinterestedness. This skepticism is not mine alone. Many have noted the relationship between this highly individualistic and self-celebrating concept of art and the social emancipation (or more accurately, the social abandonment) of artists with the demise of reliable aristocratic patronage, and suspected it of seeking a compensatory advantage. "Materialist" historians have long investigated the relationship between its high-minded claims and actual marketing strategies.

Particularly as it pertains to music, the doctrine of aesthetic autonomy was preeminently a congeries of German ideas about German art that consoled and inspired the Germans at a particular point in German history. Even in the nineteenth century, it never won much credence in France or Italy or Russia (though Britain was susceptible). Now that the whole twentieth century has run its course and German music has run aground, the claim of universality is threadbare, recalling Stanley Hoffman's sublime definition of ethnocentrism in these pages some years ago: "There are universal values, and they happen to be mine." The doctrines that Johnson's, Fineberg's, and Kramer's books continue to advance retain so little credibility that one has to ask what sort of reader they mean to persuade.

Who Needs Classical Music?, the worst of them, is a painful thing to read. Julian Johnson declares himself an Adorno epigone, but the declaration is superfluous. Anyone who knows Adorno even by reputation will recognize this truculent book as the Cliff Notes version. But the dour Frankfurter, the most histrionically pessimistic of all cultural critics, is not the only presence in these pages. He functions here as the bad cop, yanked into an unlikely partnership with Matthew Arnold, the prophet of sweetness and light, but also the original herald of elitism ("the best that has been thought and said"). Johnson ladles out the Adornian brimstone and the Arnoldian bubble bath in indiscriminate gobbets, desperate as he is to recover for himself and the rest of his deposed cohort the unquestioned cultural authority, and the unlimited official patronage, that once were theirs. The result, a sort of *Beyond the Fringe* parody of a parish sermon in some Anglican backwater, will convince no one but the choir. To have such a voice advocating one's own cause is mortifying.

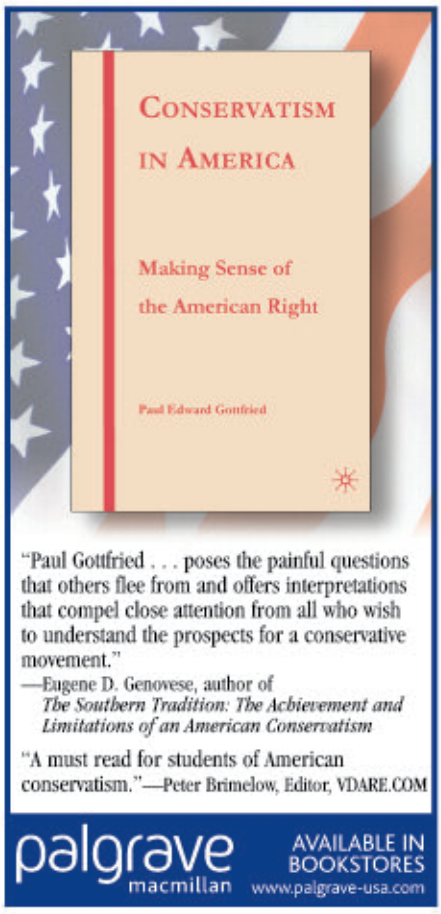
The primary assertion, made on the first page of Johnson's introduction and reiterated endlessly thereafter, is that classical music is uniquely distinguished by "its claim to function *as art*, as opposed to entertainment." The whole book is an elaboration of this categorical, invidious, didactically italicized, and altogether untenable distinction, the purpose of which is to cancel the claims of consumers on the prerogatives of producers.

John Cage once observed that he was fortunate in that his work was also his entertainment. That was his explanation for his lifelong commitment to the practice of a particularly abstruse brand of art-making that afforded little or no pecuniary return: he took pleasure in it, or (to quote my desk dictionary) found in it "an agreeable occupation for the mind." That pleasure, the agreeable mental pursuit that (if one is persistent and lucky) can repay the pursuer with a great intensity of delight, was certainly my own conduit into what has become my vocation. Wasn't it Johnson's? Isn't it everybody's? Can there be any other motivation for engagement with art? Before romanticism raised the stakes, the purpose of art was always described as that of "pleasing." All pretenses notwithstanding, other purposes, and especially Johnson's, remain secondary.

The reason for denigrating pleasure and claiming some other "higher" purpose for art (or, alternatively, denying that it has any purpose at all) had in the first place to do, perhaps, with the bad conscience that Kant's principle of disinterestedness imposed. But the notoriously tin-eared Kant did not deny pleasure, least of all to music, which he designated "the highest among those arts that are valued for their pleasantness." Granted, he intended no compliment, for he meant thereby to deny music a place among the arts that are valued "by the culture they supply to the mind." And one can understand an impulse to try to reclaim for music the status thus denied it by downgrading its sensuous appeal and relegating that aspect to the low category of "entertainment."

But pleasure does not have to be defined sensuously, and there are all kinds of pleasures: guilty pleasures, altruistic pleasures, animal pleasures, spiritual pleasures, perverse pleasures, the pleasure of a good meal, of a good cry, of worthy accomplishment, of self-improvement, of self-possession, of exclusion, of ascendancy, of dominion, of revenge. And, of course, there is also the pleasure known in Kant's native tongue as *Schadenfreude*. I must reject the claims of those who affect to pursue the arts for reasons other than pleasure or satisfaction. The question, rather, is pleasure of what kind?

Johnson asserts high claims indeed. He contends that his commitment to classical music is an ethical choice. His exhortation to the prospective cultural consumer is akin to Betty Friedan's old combination of promise and threat—that if women "do not put forth, finally, that effort [and Johnson is forever reminding us how difficult and demanding classical music is] to become all that they have it in them to become, they will forfeit their own humanity." The difference is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IN AMERICA
Making Sense of
the American Right
Paul Edward Gottfried
"Paul Gottfried . . . poses the painful questions that others flee from and offers interpretations that compel close attention from all who wish to understand the prospects for a conservative movement."
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The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservatism
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that Friedan was talking about social and economic justice and Johnson is only talking about some kind of music. But that ethical pretense gives him the pretext to open the floodgates to a deluge of supplementary invidious distinctions, chiefly at the expense of what (in German, inevitably) is known as "entertainment music" (*Unterhaltungsmusik*, or *U-Musik*), or what in English we call popular music. Of our three authors Johnson is the one least content to sing Arnoldian praises of his chosen genre. Like Adorno, he feels compelled to heap torrents of frantic abuse on the Big Other. These passages are shameful, in the first instance, because—again like Adorno—he shows himself to be exceedingly ill informed about the object of his derision.

What is driving him? No doubt there is pleasure in it, but there is more. Let us observe his invective at full tilt. The middle of the book contains the main elaboration of the art-versus-entertainment polemic. Here is its dizzy zenith, which I quote at some length, only slightly condensed, so that you may fairly judge its tenor. Contemporary popular culture, Johnson contends, is

> obsessed by packaging, image, and design. The surface is everything.... Even in music, visuals are everything: hence the ubiquity not only of the music video but the marketing of the star. And when it comes to the music itself, the surface sheen is everything; the music is literally one-dimensional—it has one sound, one timbre, one kind of material. It rejects polyphony and discursive forms. It is as if the art of costume design were replaced by admiring pieces of cloth.... What might seem harmless in relation to cultural practices, fashion, cars, or even music, is clearly invidious in relation to people. The ideal of humanity on which we have based our greatest religious, ethical, philosophical, and political thinking is not defined by our outward, material surface but by our capacity to exceed the limits of our material existence. Great art expresses this ideal in every work. In rejecting it to embrace the ideal of a blank and depthless surface embodied in contemporary culture, we reject that ideal of humanity and instead embrace a simulacrum—a synthetic and hollow substitute. Human potential is not well expressed by the fashionable, the glossy, or the chic, and yet we allow ourselves to be dominated by a culture defined almost exclusively in these terms. In doing so, we collude in our own reduction to objects.
>
> The emphasis on the surface of things is essentially inhumane. It is pornographic because it fetishizes the materiality of human existence and denies the spiritual personality that vivifies it from within. Perhaps my use of the term "pornographic" seems inappropriate and sensationalist in relation to music. But the central category of pornography is perhaps not sex but the process by which the humane is reduced to the status of things. Pornography is reification employed in the sexual arena and displays all of its hallmarks: the reproducibility and interchangeability of all commodities, the reduction to an object, the importance of packaging, the reduction to pure surface, the simulacrum of desire, the formulaic sameness of posture, the domination of nature. But the sexual arena does not have a monopoly on the debasement of the humane. While society publicly deplores the objectification of the humane in pornography, it is busy colluding with it elsewhere through advertising, commodity fetishism, and music.

This harangue, from the musical equivalent of the religious right, is not something to be rebutted or otherwise "falsified," but to be gazed upon by those with a capacity for wonder. It commits virtually every one of the sins I enumerated above, from the false dichotomization of the material and spiritual (as if classical music did not have a material presence), to the double standard whereby the reification of classical music in the form of recordings and other manufactured goods is overlooked, to smug nostalgia for an uncommodified golden age, to the utopian delusion that such a paradise might be regained, to the hypocritical stance of moral superiority in the face of the author's obviously mendacious (unless stunningly ignorant) reduction of the other (as having only "one sound, one timbre, one kind of material"). The social snobbery borders on racism (we have minds, they have bodies) and the browbeating is blatant (assent or be lumped with Them). A page or so later, losing all self-control, Johnson tears into a description of people who do not seem to need classical music, in thrall to "prerational immediacy," lost in "libidinal energy," athirst "for the luxury of blind, adolescent emotions." What could be more "invidious in relation to people"?

What renders this rant especially awful to anyone who knows the history of music and its discourses is its resonance with the most bigoted of all texts about music, Wagner's *Das Judenthum in der Musik*, or *Jewry in Music*, which appeared in 1850. The morally charged dichotomization of surface and depth is a romantic trope that—as the musicologist Holly Watkins has shown—goes back at least as far as the writings of Hoffmann. Between Hoffmann and Wagner, however, the metaphor of depth had been claimed by German writers as a national trait; and just as nationalism underwent its general transformation from a modernizing and liberalizing discourse into a belligerent and regressive one in the later nineteenth century, so the notion of spiritual depth had been turned into a weapon of national and racial aggrandizement in Wagner's hands. "In listening to either our naïve or our consciously artistic musical doings, however," wrote Wagner (in William Ashton Ellis's nineteenth-century translation),

> were the Jew to try to probe their heart and living sinews, he would find there really not one whit of likeness to *his* musical nature; and the utter strangeness of this phenomenon must scare him back so far, that he could never pluck up nerve again to mingle in our art-creating. Yet his whole position in our midst never tempts the Jew to so intimate a glimpse into our essence: wherefore, either intentionally (provided he recognizes this position of his towards us) or instinctively (if he is incapable of understanding us at all), he merely listens to the barest surface of our art, but not to its life-bestowing inner organism; and through this apathetic listening alone, can he trace external similarities with the only thing intelligible to his power of view, peculiar to this special nature.

More specific, and with an even more chilling echo of Johnson's language, is Wagner's characterization of Felix Mendelssohn, whose example

> has shown us that a Jew may have the amplest store of specific talents, may own the finest and most varied culture, the highest and the tenderest sense of honor—yet without all these pre-eminences helping him, were it but one single time, to call forth in us that deep, heart-searching effect which we await from Art because we know her capable thereof, because we have felt it many a time and oft, so soon as once a hero of our art has, so to say, but opened his mouth to speak to us. To professional critics, who haply have reached a like consciousness with ourselves hereon, it may be left to prove by specimens of Mendelssohn's art-products our statement of this indubitably certain thing;

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> by way of illustrating our general impression, let us here be content with the fact that, in hearing a tone piece of this composer's, we have only been able to feel engrossed where nothing beyond our more or less amusement-craving fantasy was roused through the presentation, stringing together, and entanglement of the most elegant, the smoothest, and most polished figures—as in the kaleidoscope's changeful play of form and color—but never where those figures were meant to take the shape of deep and stalwart feelings of the human heart.

Wagner's rhetoric, lacking the Arnoldian or possibly Leavisite strain on which Johnson draws, is less morally fraught than Johnson's, and more purely racist. Does that let Johnson off the hook? Doubtless he would claim as much, but other aesthetic moralists have been less sure. George Steiner, who defers to no man in what he himself has called "the worship (the word is hardly exaggerated) of the classic," finds himself at the tormented twilight of his life baffled by the example of the culture-loving Germans of the mid-twentieth century, Wagner's heirs, "who sang Schubert in the evening and tortured in the morning." He confesses that he is "haunted more and more by the question, 'Why did the humanities not humanize?' I don't have an answer." But that is because the question is wrong. It is all too obvious by now that teaching people that their love of Schubert makes them better people teaches them nothing but vainglory, and inspires attitudes that are the very opposite of humane. Julian Johnson's tract suppurates with attitudes like these. To cast aesthetic preferences as moral choices at the dawn of the twenty-first century is an obscenity. Both the book itself and its reception (as recorded on Amazon.com) expose the sort of pleasure it promotes: that of solidarity in sanctimony. To all who have read it with enjoyment I urgently prescribe a reading of *Father Sergius*, Tolstoy's parable of moral exhibitionism and its comeuppance. I will pray for the salvation of their souls.

IV.

You will not find anything comparably disgraceful in Joshua Fineberg's book, but his exhortations will prove no less futile. Fineberg is no moral grandstander. His vices are self-pity and false humility. Where *Who Needs Classical Music?* apes Adorno, the author of *Classical Music, Why Bother?* plays Uriah Heep. It may be a better way to capture the reader's benevolence, but it is a sham. Still lost in the German romantic miasma, Fineberg continues to trade in universals and absolutes, and his strategy, like Johnson's, is to flatter his readers' elitist impulses.

So a few words about elitism before proceeding. All these authors argue strenuously that there is no necessary conflict between democratic or egalitarian ideals and striving for the best. Who would disagree? If that were all that elitism implied, there would be no debate. Contention swirls not around the question of whether there is such a thing as quality, but around the question of how—and, especially, by whom—it is to be defined. When Johnson declares that "to argue that classical music, like art more generally, makes a claim to types of functions and meanings distinct from those of popular culture is to risk the charge of elitism," he is flagrantly disingenuous. "Distinct from" is a transparent euphemism for "better than," and Johnson's recourse to euphemism betrays his guilty consciousness that his argument carries politically unacceptable baggage. He is arguing for privilege, not equality; and that is why his index predictably contains seven entries under "political correctness," the discredited euphemism through which privileged people have gone on the offensive in defense of their privileges.

Johnson borrows from Adorno the notion that what proponents of popular culture call democracy is instead the "pseudo-democracy of commercial culture," which pretends to offer consumers free choice but in fact dehumanizes them by omnipotently manipulating their desires for commercial gain. People who consume popular music are not exercising taste, on this view, for they have no taste to exercise. Rather, they robotically gobble up whatever the culture industry doles out. Johnson says that those who would ascribe autonomous cultural agency to hoi polloi "might at least pause to wonder why today's hits, apparently deeply significant to millions, become objects of derision in a matter of years." Really? The Beatles? Elvis? Sinatra? And do the touted geniuses of classical music always achieve timelessness? Read Bernard Shaw on Hermann Goetz some time. Or Constant Lambert on Bernard van Dieren. Or re-read, in a decade or so, Julian Johnson on Jonathan Harvey, or Alex Ross on John Adams. The idea that in popular culture production equals consumption was already a canard when it was first handed down from Adorno's delphic armchair. (Think of all those rockers driving taxis who by his logic should be millionaires.) That his followers still parrot him only shows how utterly ideology trumps observation in the world of "critical theory," of all academic approaches the least critical by far.

ANTHONY RUSSO

"For me personally," writes Fineberg, "the problem is not elites based on merit, but elites of birth, gender, race, or class." Again, who would dare to disagree? But until one has offered a definition of merit, the statement is empty; indeed, it is a Trojan horse. Fineberg knows better than to load it with moralizing slogans, although he does not scruple to pour scorn on those who "spout" the virtues of diversity. Instead he seeks his universals and absolutes within the world of art itself. He preaches the faith forthrightly, on its actual romantic merits, and with due reckoning of the price that it exacts in enlightenment. Just as religious belief demands the voluntary repression of rational skepticism, he writes,

> a true belief in art is also predicated on an underlying conceptual framework that depends just as absolutely on a belief in abstract criteria of worth. This notion, which is profoundly out of fashion today, has formed the underpinning of artistic endeavor in the West for a very long time. Adherents of this idea believe that even if societal fashions or institutional structures are opposed to a particular artist or work, some essential greatness (or lack thereof) will ultimately determine the worth of the art object if given the chance. And even if the work is never recognized, it is still of equal (albeit latent) value. In other words, a Rembrandt hanging in the woods would still be great even if no one had the good fortune to see it.

You have to grant a certain respect to Fineberg's up-front promulgation of mystique. He does not try to argue the case for his objective criteria, although he does make some attempt to define them. He merely invites the reader, in what he calls "the artistic or aesthetic version of Pascal's wager," to consent to them. Pascal's wager, you will recall, is the proposition that believing in God, or at least acting as if you did and behaving yourself accordingly, is a good bet. If it turns out there is no God and no afterlife, then all you have lost is a bit

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of ephemeral terrestrial amusement. If it turns out that He does exist, you gain eternal bliss. So put aside your modern mind, dear reader, and follow the ancient path of righteousness. (Pascal offers a tip: rote religious exercises such as rosaries will help, for *cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira*, "this will make you believe and make you stupid.")

Of course, Pascal was weighing something slightly more momentous than choosing a musical menu. And nobody need ask about the source of authority for religious dogma. But where shall the prospective musical novice turn? Turn to me, says Fineberg. I know what's good for you. "Art is not about giving people what they want. It's about giving them something they don't know they want. It's about submitting to someone else's vision; forcing your aesthetic sense to assimilate the output of someone else's.... All art demands a surrendering of your vision in submission to the artist's or at least the museum or concert curator's."

Submit! Our youngest author, bizarrely enough, assumes the most patently paternalistic posture, regurgitating the immortal words of Lord Reith of Stonehaven, the first director-general of the BBC: "We know precisely what the public wants, and by Heaven they're not going to get it!" You see why I thought of Uriah Heep. Behind the 'umble exterior is an iron will, and an ego of positively Rushmorean proportions. Fineberg reminds his readers that the onus is theirs, not the artist's, when it comes to "deciphering his or her meaning," for "religious individuals do not achieve a worshipful state by being God," but "by contemplating God's actions (or the actions we attribute to a God)."

Unlike Johnson's, then, Fineberg's cards are on the table. What are his objective and abstract criteria of musical worth? Merely what any university or conservatory composition teacher will tell you they are. Their measure is the artist's degree of craft-plus-originality. Since craft can only be judged by practitioners, the appeal of an artwork to an audience can never serve as a valid measure of its value, except in reverse:

> The level of skill required to make most art of whatever type requires intense and (from society's viewpoint) expensive training. It seems clear that this training cannot be made freely available to all comers without posing a burden that society would never be willing to bear. Moreover, an art like contemporary classical music is doubly burdensome. Composers don't produce wealth as they become more successful; they consume it. Bigger, more prominent events lose even more money (and require more subsidies) than small student concerts. The success of a composer can be measured by taking the inverse of the composer's market value: The more negative the market value, the more important the composer.

So kindly leave war to the generals, and pay up. But music is far too important to be left to the composers. Their interests and aims, when insulated from public judgment, are apt to be trivial, amounting to contests over academic turf and flare-ups of professional rivalry. The risible second half of Fineberg's book is a perfect illustration—risible, because after a hundred-page sermon on disinterestedness we get a sales pitch. He turns out to be flogging a product called "spectralism," a fairly recent French trend based on computer-assisted spectrographic analyses of instrumental timbres. And we also get a sectarian polemic against Julian Johnson's faction, the Vienna-derived twelve-tone school, now celebrating eighty years in the desert. My universal values, Fineberg assures us, can lick their universal values, and my technique is more advanced.

Will this sort of thing really persuade nonprofessional readers to bother about classical music? Obviously not, but the book is not really meant for them. Like Johnson's, it is sooner meant to comfort the author's own cohort—it has already called forth a hardy little amen corner in the blogosphere—and perhaps lull the dean into keeping the old curriculum in place.

V.

With Lawrence Kramer we come at last to a writer who really addresses the readers whom he claims to address. He, too, writes from within the German romantic tradition, but he has the sense explicitly to reject Johnsonian-Adornian moralism (although, he admits, "part of me is in sympathy with it") and Finebergian mystification, along with all "condescending and authoritarian" attitudes. His approach picks up directly from E. T. A. Hoffmann, the fount of the tradition, perhaps as a way of skirting the pitfalls to which later proponents of classical music have so readily fallen prey. Indeed, Kramer quite resembles Hoffmann. Both are literary men—Kramer's scholarly training was in English and comparative literature—and both write about instrumental music in a way that turns it into a kind of wordless literature.

That was seen in Hoffmann's day as an elevation of music (and literature). This strain of criticism reached an early peak—its pinnacle, I would say—in the writings of Robert Schumann. The trouble with the approach in hands other than Schumann's is that it readily descends into reductive verbal (usually narrative) paraphrase—into "readings"—which can then replace the music as the focus of interest and the topic of discussion. Although Kramer's readings of music can make for entertaining and sometimes absorbing reading—let it be said straightaway that he gives as much pleasure to the reader as his counterparts give pain—I am unpersuaded that they will win any souls to the cause. They are simply too secondary to the musical experience. As Hector Berlioz, another musico-literary paragon of early romanticism, once observed, music can give an idea of love, but love can give no idea of music. Explaining what music is "about," no matter how appealingly, will not give anyone an idea of why people who listen to music find it so powerful.

That is why I feel sure that Kramer's book, like the others, will mainly be read by those already convinced of its premise. Although he invokes a famous screed by Virgil Thomson against the "music appreciation racket," Kramer's method is actually quite similar to that of "appreciation" lecturers (though handicapped by the absence of sounding examples). Those worthies are always pressing listeners to listen for "the theme," since tracing its course through an extended composition, supposedly, will instill the ability to perceive its form.

For Kramer this is just "formalism," almost as great a sin for hermeneuts as it was for Stalinists. But his first and most substantial chapter, "The Fate of Melody and the Dream of Return," really amounts to the same thing, only now the theme being traced is "read" as the subject persona of a quasi-literary narrative. The formal routines that in the hands of music appreciators are scorned as sterile all at once become stirring life trajectories, symbolizing and catalyzing the listener's own emotional epiphanies (*Erlebnisse*, in the German original) in a manner very effectively described half a century ago in Susanne K. Langer's *Feeling and Form*. But this was not a new insight even in Langer's day. It is a bedrock tenet of romanticism, and again goes straight back to Hoffmann. Its rise has been traced in a fascinating book by the cultural historian James H. Johnson called *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History*, which demonstrated how the kind of absorbed, attentive listening all

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proponents of classical music advocate, and the subjective identification with its progress that Kramer promotes, caught on in the mid-nineteenth century.

I bring up Langer and Johnson not to dispute a claim of originality that Kramer never makes, but rather to emphasize that the musical properties and the listening habits that Kramer wants to associate with classical music in general have a very circumscribed history and range of application. Their starting point has been located by Karol Berger in *Bach's Cycle, Mozart's Arrow: An Essay on the Origins of Musical Modernity*, a recent and highly stimulating book. The model that Kramer proposes for classical music—that of forward-progressing narrative (the time arrow, in Berger's language)—is in fact only one of a number of ways in which classical music is organized. It is the one best suited to music-appreciation lectures, since it is the one in which it makes sense to trace the vicissitudes (a.k.a. the "development") of a theme—though Kramer's account misses the even more crucial role of goal-directed (or "functional") harmony in propelling the arrow, perhaps because he thought it too technical.

The thematic-development model, though it does turn a lot of nineteenth-century compositions into thrilling emotional "journeys," lost its prominence in the twentieth century, and it characterizes very little recent classical music. The "minimalists," who now turn out the music of greatest proven audience appeal, frankly eschew it. For this reason, Lawrence Kramer's view of his subject seems in its own, less objectionable way just as nostalgic as Julian Johnson's or Joshua Fineberg's. It entails a kind of music and—more to the point—a kind of listener that is receding into the past, and it is unlikely to help solve classical music's most pressing problem, which is the problem of audience renewal.

I am uneasy, moreover, about encouraging listeners to decode formal archetypes, as when Kramer uses Beethoven's symphonic trajectories to show how music can become the bearer of deep-seated cultural myths. Such stratagems descend ineluctably into abuse. Look what's happened to poor Shostakovich, whose symphonies and quartets, perhaps the twentieth century's paramount examples of music as *Bildungsroman*, have been turned into political footballs by interpreters who have no ear for music. Or to poor Chaikovsky, whose symphonies are now routinely read as evidence of his homosexual guilt, and in support of ridiculous legends about his alleged suicide. If homophiles or homophobes can get their various kicks from a Chaikovsky symphony, or communists or anti-communists from Shostakovich, that is fine with me: I do not care why they listen as long as they go on listening. But when they tell me they know what a piece objectively means, and that their certainty makes them better listeners than I, then I know that they have stopped listening. The paraphrase is all they hear.

What draws listeners to music—not just to classical music, but to any music—is what cannot be paraphrased: the stuff that sets your voice a-humming, your toes a-tapping, your mind's ear ringing, your ear's mind reeling. And that is not the kind of response anyone's books can instill. It is picked up, like language, from exposure and reproduction, which eventually lead to internalization. Kramer leads prospective listeners astray when he counsels them, in a chapter about performing music, that the "most vital role for performance" in relation to the fixed score "is precisely to suggest verbal and imagistic connections with the world, the very thing that the traditional culture of classical music, in the twentieth century at any rate, tried to get us to regard as forbidden." If the value of music lies in the words and the pictures it prompts, then why not cut out the middle man and go straight for the words and the pictures? Like a good citizen of Chelm, a listener taking Kramer's advice will go to the market for a goose and come home with a bucket of water.

Nor is Kramer's account entirely devoid of vainglory and invidiousness. Nobody's defense of classical music, it seems, can do without these failings. He traces his own involvement with classical music "from the day that I first accidentally heard a Beethoven overture (someone bought the record by mistake) rocking through the chilly, lifeless suburban 'family room' of my early teens." Ah, sensitive youth! And in a chapter on song, Kramer makes his only—inevitably, ignorant and prejudiced—comparisons between the classical and the popular, asserting that, because of its emancipated accompaniment, art song can convey complexity of feeling—irony, ambivalence, self-reflection—whereas popular song can offer no more than a good tune and an uncomplicated emotional payoff. This is balderdash. Indeed, in another chapter Kramer himself takes note of Cole Porter's "wavering balance of irony and sentiment" (and I won't even mention the Beatles' "A Day in the Life" or "She's Leaving Home"). He will answer, no doubt, that Porter and McCartney had learned some tricks from classical music. No doubt they had, but that commerce has always been a two-way street.

Ultimately, Kramer betrays classical music by viewing it through an Eliotic scrim. Just as Eliot proclaimed that "it is a function of all art to give us some perception of an order in life, by imposing an order upon it," so Kramer, like Johnson and Fineberg, sees the key asset of classical music as that of providing repose and balance, control and restraint, amid the frightful hurly-burly of modern life. This leaves a lot out—where's *The Rite of Spring*? where's the *Grosse Fuge*?—and it colludes with the regressive and reductive tendencies that all three authors deplore, which threaten to turn classical music into an escapist pursuit or to link it with high-end consumer goods. Our solitary Bay Area classical station has an ad in which, to the strains of Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony (one of Kramer's prime exhibits), the announcer soothingly intones, "On the homeward commute, when it's just you and the radio, reach for the good stuff, reach for KDFC." KDFC's emblematic offering is a daily hour called "The Island of Sanity."

And yet, although I kvetch, I cannot deny that these contentments are among classical music's appeals, and no one has the right to declare them illegitimate. Indeed, I condemn attempts to hide classical music's association with creature comforts or its class affinities, because hypocrisy is the one thing a preacher's reputation cannot survive. That is why one of Julian Johnson's worst moves is to rail against Pierre Bourdieu's contention that classical music's "claim to difference is derived *entirely*" from its function "as a tool of class distinction." The over-emphatic italics give him away. He knows that Bourdieu never made such a claim. And he also knows that the claim Bourdieu did make—that class distinction is among the factors that have propagated high culture in our society, particularly since (and owing to) the decline of hereditary aristocracy—is irrefutable. Johnson is reduced to arguing on the level of a marital spat: when one spouse says, "But what about *x*?" the other is sure to retort, "All you ever think about is *x*!"

Here Kramer saves the day. The best parts of his book, which I hope he will gather up and publish as a single essay so that they can be read without having to read the rest, are the ones in which he writes about the use of classical music in the movies. I prescribe them to Johnson and Fineberg, because they suggest the myriad positive ways in which classical music has actually operated—and will go

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on operating—in our culture. They transcend the silly opposition of the classical and the popular, because they show the ways in which the classical functions *within* the popular. And they evade the pitfalls of hermeneutics because here Kramer offers not readings of music, but readings of readings. To ask "what does it mean?" is death for music; but to ask "what has it meant?" can be illuminating. The one imposes arbitrary limits, the other welcomes all comers to share in the pleasure of engagement and response.

One of these passages juxtaposes a number of films "that depend on performances of classical music to defeat joylessness, intolerance, hypocrisy, and worse." The best known is the venerable tearjerker *Brief Encounter*, in which Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto, derided by many as outmoded, bloated, and sentimental, becomes—through these very attributes—a reliquary of thwarted love and dashed hopes as cathartically relived by an "ordinary," emotionally repressed Englishwoman, who missed her one extraordinary chance in life. Jazz or pop music could not have embodied transcendence of ordinary modern life in this context, Kramer implies, to which I would add that something grander—say, Isolde's "Liebestod"—would have so exceeded its scale as to perpetrate a bathos. Other examples include a weird old Cary Grant comedy called *People Will Talk*, in which a euphoric amateur performance of Brahms's *Academic Festival Overture* (conducted by Grant, playing a med school professor and music buff) crowns a plot that combines redemption through love with the defeat of a McCarthyish academic intrigue; and *Impromptu*, my favorite composer biopic, whose lovely anti-philistine message Kramer smartly encapsulates by observing that, of all the artists, would-be artists, and anti-artists depicted in the movie, "only [George] Sand and Chopin understand that art enhances life only indirectly, by suggestion, never by program or pronouncement." (Take that, Johnson and Fineberg.)

But Kramer's *chef d'oeuvre* is the inspired juxtaposition of two recent films, *The Pianist* and *Master and Commander*, which employ the same classical composition in their soundtracks, the Prelude to Bach's first Suite for Unaccompanied Cello. (As a lagniappe near the end of the book, he throws in yet another performance of the same morsel, Yo-Yo Ma's guest appearance on *The West Wing* in 2000.) The various handlings of the piece and its relevance to the action and the mood of the two films and the television episode are vastly different yet equally apt, and that in itself is already a superb point scored against attempts (including Kramer's own) to decode simple messages from complex musical designs. In the one context Kramer sees the piece as figuring fecundity and proliferation; in the other he reads withdrawal, maternal caring, and the fragility of life; while in the third the Prelude, cast as it were against type, acts as a poisonous little madeleine on a character's memory, and ultimately as a bearer of truth. These descriptions all ring true, even if (like any verbalization) they limit the illimitable—and isn't that the point, at last?

Not that this overflow of uncontainable signification is classical music's unique attribute or achievement. Kramer goes out of his way to remind the reader that "classical music shares this potential with more vernacular types." But what Kramer does succeed in showing is that classical music contributes a particular register of discourse that other genres do not duplicate. The classic register—I borrow the term from a fine forthcoming book by Michael Long called *Beautiful Monsters: Music, Media, and the Imaginative Classic*—is typically an elevated, exalted, aspiring one. That makes it an easy butt of ridicule. Think of Margaret Dumont, Groucho Marx's "plus-sized muse" (as Long describes her)— but also recall that by the end of *A Night at the Opera*, Miss Dumont is no longer being satirized, and opera has worked its unmocked magic. Higher is not automatically better; but opponents of snobbish pretension would be foolish to lose sight of the reality of the high-low gamut. The proof of its reality is the way it reproduces itself within all discourses: now we have "classic jazz," "classic rock," and I will bet that somebody somewhere is touting classic kitsch. We all draw upon its full range, or as much of it as we can, and its narrowing would be a loss to everyone.

With that in mind, consider Kramer's cleverly titled final chapter, "Persephone's Fiddle," which is largely devoted to—guess what?—a violinist Kramer once heard busking unaccompanied Bach in the New York subway. Unlike Joshua Bell at L'Enfant Plaza, this fiddler drew a rapt crowd:

> It was early fall, the start of a new academic semester, and the performer on the platform—Times Square, my usual spot—looked like a music student trying to pick up some extra cash for books or scores. She was young, in her early twenties, blonde, attractive, and well dressed, which may help explain the unusual amount of attention she was getting from a crowd that in normal circumstances wouldn't give a busker a second glance.
>
> Or maybe it was the music. . . .

Kramer goes on to speculate about what it was in Bach that so captivated fifteen or twenty listeners in that noisy atmosphere, and moved them at the end to "a moment of complete silence followed by a smattering of applause." My question, rather, is whether you noticed the difference between the scene Kramer describes and the one that the *Washington Post* reporter engineered for Joshua Bell. It couldn't be simpler, or more crucial.

Bell was playing at the entrance to the station, where trains cannot be seen and everyone is hurrying to catch one. Kramer's little Persephone was playing down on the platform, where riders are apt to be at (enforced) leisure. Little Persephone knew that she needed an appropriate location to get across her message ("Isn't this beautiful?" or "Can I have some money?" or whatever you like). The *Post* reporter chose the least appropriate location possible. One of them was trying to make money, the other was trying to make a point. And Bach served them both equally well.

As a team of Texas researchers have recently announced, there are exactly 237 known reasons why people have sex. There are at least as many reasons why they listen to classical music, of which to sit in solemn silence on a dull dark dock is only one. There will always be social reasons as well as purely aesthetic ones, and thank God for that. There will always be people who make money from it—and why not?—as well as those who starve for the love of it. Classical music is not dying; it is changing. (My favorite example right now is Gabriel Prokofiev, the British-born grandson of the Russian composer, who studied electronic music in school, has headed a successful disco-punk band, and is now writing string quartets.) Change can be opposed, and it can be slowed down, but it cannot be stopped. All three of our authors seem reluctant to acknowledge this ineluctable fact. But change is not always loss, and realizing this should not threaten but console.

Altered demographics and evolving social attitudes will work their inevitable effects. New or advancing media will continue to transform what they convey. We may not like the changes, any more than speakers of Latin may have liked the transformation of their lan-

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guage into French or Romanian. That, too, must have looked to some like corruption, degeneration, and death. Others learned to reap its rewards. Maybe it takes a historian to realize that mediation, the hydra-headed monster at which the sub-Adornos tilt, has been around as long as music has been, and its function is adaptive—which is to say, destructive and preservative in equal measure. Autonomous art, the recent product of a chance concatenation of circumstances, will last only as long as circumstances permit. But its origin, whatever it was, and its end, whatever it will be, are points on a continuum.

Don't take it from me. There is a great moment in an early episode of *The Sopranos*, everybody's favorite example right now of popular culture transmuted into art, in which a Hasid, taking a beating from a team of enforcers with Tony Soprano at their head, is putting up unexpected resistance. He reminds his tormentors of Masada, where tough Jews held out against the Romans. "The Romans," he snorts. "Where are they now?" "You're lookin' at 'em, asshole!" says Tony. Do not expect nuance from a mob boss; but if you agree that the line is funny, then you have acknowledged its kernel of truth. Toynbee could not have put it better. ◆

István Deák
THE DECIDERS

FATEFUL CHOICES: TEN DECISIONS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD, 1940–1941
By Ian Kershaw
(The Penguin Press, 596 pp., $35)

Between October 3, 1935, when the armies of Italy invaded Abyssinia, and May 10, 1940, when German troops entered the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, war after war rocked the world. In 1936, a horrendous civil war began in Spain; a year later, the Japanese attacked and devastated China; in the summer of 1939, Soviet troops trounced the Japanese army in Manchuria and Mongolia; and in September of the same year Nazi and Soviet forces wiped out Poland. Meanwhile, Great Britain and France began the notorious "phony war" against Hitler. In the winter of 1939–1940, the Soviets attacked Finland, suffering enormous losses in the process, and in April 1940, German armed forces invaded and occupied Denmark and Norway. A month later, in the most triumphant of all the German twentieth-century military campaigns, Hitler's tank divisions defeated and occupied the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, causing the British expeditionary forces to fall back to their island.

And yet all these bloody conflicts did not amount to a world war. That, as Ian Kershaw shows in this splendid and thought-provoking book, came as a result of decisions made in London, Berlin, Tokyo, Rome, Moscow, and Washington between May 1940 and fall 1941. It was then that the many local conflicts expanded and merged into a single gigantic struggle between, in the one camp, Nazi Germany, its minor European allies, and the Japanese Empire, and, in the other camp, much of the rest of the world.

That the great strategic and political decisions taken in 1940 and 1941 assured the victory of the Great Allied Powers testifies to the wisdom of Churchill and Roosevelt as well as to the supreme viability of the democratic systems over which they presided. The decisions also exposed the fatal inefficiency of militaristic, authoritarian Japan and tyrannical, fanatical Germany. Still, ultimate success in this greatest of all wars was not a democratic monopoly: the country that contributed most to the defeat of Hitler was not the United States or Great Britain but the Soviet Union, a state based on unbridled terror, whose murderous leader invariably made the wrong decisions in the years 1940–1941.

None of this will come as sensational news to readers even of college textbooks on World War II, but Kershaw—who has produced some of the most significant works on Nazi Germany, most notably a superb two-volume biography of Hitler that has caused the scholarly world to rethink many accepted views on the Führer and his times—is the first to build the entire story systematically on crucial decisions made by political leaders at the time. He uses the results of recent historical research to prove what had often been only surmised until now, and he convincingly disproves many legends—for instance, that Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June 1941 in the nick of time, just before the Soviets would have launched a preventive strike. Kershaw also engages in stimulating meditations on which decisions were inevitable and whether there were viable alternatives.

In Kershaw's account, no statesman—not even the greatest among them—lacks serious shortcomings. Churchill saved Great Britain and the world from National Socialist aggression, but he was (in Kershaw's account) unattractively enamored of his own words, and had a weakness for fanciful and unrealistic projects. Kershaw places the responsibility for the Franco-British debacle in Norway in the spring of 1940 on Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty. And he finds also that Hitler had moments of greatness, as when he brilliantly grasped, in 1939–1940, the weakness and the irresolution of the British and French government and military; and also when, in matters of strategy, he listened to a few iconoclastic generals such as Hans Guderian and Erich von Manstein rather than to the majority of German commanders. But Hitler was so convinced of his omniscience and his invincibility that in 1941 he led his country into the two-front war that he had always feared.

As for the Japanese leaders, they present a spectacle of division and indecisiveness; they drifted into a situation that many did not wish to have happen. The Japanese politicians were much too subservient to the army and the navy. And how is one to judge a supreme leadership in which the emperor, who in theory held full personal power, was allowed to ask questions from his cabinet only through the agency of one of his courtiers, and even then was not the one to formulate the contents of the question? In the crucial moment, when the government was deciding whether or not to go to war with the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands, in addition to having China already as an enemy, the emperor broke with tradition and recited a little poem composed by his grandfather from which one was to understand that he had some concerns about fighting the United States—yet without the emperor's approval, the attack on Pearl Harbor would not have taken place. As for Mussolini, he is unmasked in the book as a fool, if such an unmasking is still needed: irresolute, reckless, boastful, morbidly envious of the Führer, he would lead Italy to ruin. But Roosevelt emerges from that crucial year as a statesman of great political flair who succeeded first in keeping

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the United States out of the war and then, when it fitted his wishes and his convictions, in leading it to war.

As for the lineup of politicians, military commanders, and industrial captains below the top decision-makers, Kershaw shows that everywhere they basically fell into line when their superiors required them to do so. Despite the misgivings of many among them, they all accepted the decision to go to war. Kershaw does not think highly of the German military resistance, whose leader General Ludwig Beck hoped, in 1938, to overthrow Hitler before he engaged in the folly of attacking Czechoslovakia. Beck's fears were unwarranted: the German attack did not have to take place, because at Munich Chamberlain and Daladier gave large parts of Czechoslovakia as a gift to Hitler. In any case, Kershaw believes that Beck would not have been followed by the vast majority of the German officers.

Particularly appalling was the servility of the Italian establishment, many of whose members, as well as King Victor Emmanuel III, were convinced that Il Duce would bring about the country's defeat and destruction. The Japanese military elite, which was often profoundly divided along political-ideological and service lines, especially between army and navy, nevertheless unanimously rallied for the war effort and dragged the non-military elite of functionaries and industrialists with them. The British social and political elite also lined up behind Churchill once he had won the fight in the cabinet against those who sought accommodation with Hitler. In the Soviet Union, after having been partly annihilated by the purges of 1937–1938, the surviving generals, party leaders, and high-ranking bureaucrats were happy to be alive in 1940, and so they offered no resistance to Stalin's diplomatic and military decisions. It is remarkable, however, that thousands of officers who had been released in 1941 from concentration camps played a crucial role in stopping the German onslaught and in leading the Red Army to final victory.

Unlike the British, Soviet, and German statesmen, Roosevelt had ample time to decide whether the United States would fight, and when, and where. Similarly, members of the American establishment were in no hurry to make up their mind about American policy. At first the neutralists and the isolationists dominated. But by 1941, after it became clear that beyond helping Great Britain with shipments of arms it was also necessary to participate in the effective defense of that country and to offer material aid to the Soviet Union, America's military, industrial, and business leaders lined up easily behind Roosevelt's pro-war policy. Whether the official American entry into the conflict would have occurred without Pearl Harbor remains a matter of speculation. Kershaw believes that it would have taken place in any case, at least as regards a war against Germany.

Of the ten decisions that Kershaw discusses, the first was undoubtedly the most significant. Without the London government's resolve not to negotiate with the Nazis, the European struggle might have ended then and there. All other decisions would have become superfluous, or would at least have been very different. It is important to appreciate the distressing circumstances under which Churchill's War Cabinet met between May 25 and May 28 to decide whether to continue the fight against Germany. By then only very few British troops had been brought home from Dunkirk, and Britain was quite defenseless against a possible German onslaught. It was therefore perfectly understandable, Kershaw argues, for Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax to offer to negotiate with Hitler, if possible through the intermediary of Mussolini.

As Kershaw explains, Halifax was as adamant as Churchill that Britain's freedom must be preserved, but he hoped to gain time by making concessions to the Germans. Churchill and Halifax equally hated communism and saw the Soviet Union as a major menace, but for Churchill the Nazis were the primary enemy. By accommodating Hitler, he stated, "we should become a slave state." In all likelihood, Kershaw explains, Britain would have been forced fatally to weaken its fleet, surrender some of its major colonies, and endure the pro-German Edward VIII as king and the Hitler admirer Lloyd George as prime minister.

But Churchill stood firm, and so did several fellow War Cabinet members. At last even Halifax came around, and turned into a dedicated advocate of the war effort. Those were tragic as well as heart-lifting days, brilliantly explored in John Lukacs's *Five Days in London: May 1940*. The only somewhat disconcerting element in all this is how long and how seriously British statesmen discussed the possibility of Mussolini's coming to their aid as an intermediary in the negotiations. Not only did the Duce have no power to change events, but he himself wanted war, since he hoped to gobble up French and British colonies.

ANTHONY RUSSO

Kershaw's scene now shifts to Berlin, where the Führer and his newly minted field marshals bask in the glory of genuine popular enthusiasm. Gone were the gloomy days of September 1939, when many Germans feared the renewal of the two-front war and ultimate defeat. By June 1940, public celebrations had reached their crescendo. Not only had both Poland and France been completely defeated, with small losses for the German armies, but there were seemingly no more enemies left. Germans from Hitler down expected that the British would come to reason and the world would be divided between them and Germany. But the hated Churchill proved to be adamant, and Hitler did not really know how to deal with the problem, because neither he nor his admirals and generals believed in the possibility of an invasion. Why this was so is unclear to me: Churchill's rousing rhetoric notwithstanding, it is unlikely that barely armed British soldiers, militiamen, and civilians would have fought to the death "on the beaches … in the fields and in the streets." At least the German leaders could have been inspired by the case of the British Channel Islands, where—at the orders of the London government, it is true—the local administration and population meekly surrendered to (and thereafter generally collaborated with) the German invaders.

For the Germans, there was the formidable obstacle of the British Home Fleet, but the German High Command made no serious plans to deal with the problem; instead, Hitler and the generals put their faith in the Luftwaffe's ability to bomb Britain into submission. In any event, and without even waiting for the success of the Blitz, Hitler decided on July 31, 1940 to attack the Soviet Union. This was the second crucial decision of that year—the one that, as we know today, led to Nazism's defeat. Hitler's decision has been the subject of much debate, complicated by the lack of convincing documentary evidence as to what really motivated the Nazi leader. Kershaw and others argue that the decision was both ideological and strategic. It was ideological owing to Hitler's manic hatred of "Judeo-Bolshevism" and his dream of opening up living space in the East for the allegedly space-starved German people; it was strategic owing to his desire to force a settlement on the British government through victory in the Rus-

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sian campaign. Stating that "a campaign against Russia would be child's play," the Führer declared that because the British and the Soviet Union would inevitably become allies, it would be best to destroy the Soviets as soon as possible.

Inspired by the Stalinist purges as well as by the Soviet fiasco in the Russo-Finnish war, the Germans grossly underestimated the strength and the dedication of the Red Army. Even in its weakened state, the Red Army surpassed the Wehrmacht in troops, tanks, artillery pieces, and airplanes. Characteristically, even Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, the only person of high rank who argued against the Russian campaign, fell into line once he had learned of Hitler's wishes. He still hoped, though, for the defeat of Great Britain with the help of a hugely improved German fleet. This, he expected, would lead to the establishment of a great German colonial empire. Kershaw ponders the possibility of a strategic alternative for the Germans, and mentions the Mediterranean, where a successful war against the British could possibly have been fought. But he then concludes that "given the leadership which Germany had, and the very reason she was facing a strategic dilemma in the summer and autumn of 1940 in the first place, the attack on the Soviet Union was indeed the only practicable way open."

It requires quite a mental leap to move from the hate-filled, fanatical, and yet sentimental and petty-bourgeois milieu of Hitler's headquarters to the sedate, formal, conservative, and militaristic atmosphere of Japan's center of power. Unlike Germany, where the cabinet never met, and unlike the Soviet Union, where members of the reigning Communist Party Politburo hardly ever sat together, Japan's civilian government met regularly. Kershaw writes of Japan's "factionalized authoritarianism." In that country, too, a fatal decision was taken in 1940, namely to shift the center of military attention from the north—that is, from the politically nearly independent Kwantung Army's operations in Mongolia and Manchuria—to the south, specifically southeast Asia. There the Japanese concept of the "Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere" would prevail. More importantly, the oil wells and the rubber plantations of the Dutch East Indies might be exploited at a time when the United States demanded that the Japanese evacuate China in exchange for American oil and scrap metal. Reading Kershaw's account of Japanese deliberations, one experiences a sense of inevitability: they would never permit themselves to lose face, and the Americans would never allow the whole region to fall into Japanese hands.

The story then moves to Rome, where, in 1940, decisions were made to attack France, then to beat the British in Egypt and, finally, to invade Greece—all this in an atmosphere of wishful thinking. As Kershaw writes: "What passed [in Rome] for dictatorial decisiveness was in reality the merest veneer of half-baked assumptions, superficial observations, amateurish judgment, and wholly uncritical assessment." Since Italy was hopelessly poor as well as unprepared for war, its armed forces experienced defeat after defeat. By January 1941, for instance, the British held 113,000 Italian prisoners. The Italians' failure in Libya and the Balkans burdened Hitler with some of his most exasperating problems.

Stalin's court was cruder and far more dangerous than Hitler's court. Kershaw's chapter on Moscow begins with an obscene remark uttered by Stalin a few days after the beginning of the German invasion: "Lenin left us a great legacy, but we, his heirs, have f—d it up." Kershaw also reminds us that in the late 1930s, no one in a high position in the Soviet Union was safe. In 1937–1938 alone, 110,000 people were shot, including 80 of the 101 highest military commanders. Still, all was not insane self-destruction. After 1935, for instance, Soviet diplomacy worked hard, although ultimately unsuccessfully, to isolate Nazi Germany and to assemble all left-wing forces into so-called Popular Fronts. This was in complete contradiction to Stalin's earlier policy, which had aimed at isolating and destroying all non-communist left-wingers as "social fascists." After some initial success, however, the Popular Fronts failed everywhere; nor did Great Britain and France show serious interest in concluding a military alliance with Stalin. This led the Soviets to accept the idea of an accommodation with Nazi Germany.

On August 23, 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed in Moscow, which provided for the division of Eastern Europe between the Soviet Union and Germany. Kershaw insists that the pact favored Germany more than it did the Soviet Union, because even though the Soviets gained large territories, the brutality of their annexations earned them the hatred of the Romanians, the Western Ukrainians, and the Baltic peoples. For this the Russian people—and, one might add, even more the Jews, the eternal scapegoats—later paid a terrible price. Moreover, Stalin abandoned the line of defense along the old Soviet frontier in favor of a new line of defense to be drawn up in the newly annexed territories. For this, however, it was too late.

Stalin harbored no illusions about the brittleness of the German-Soviet alliance, and he ordered preparations for the inevitable confrontation. But he wanted to delay the conflict until 1942: under no circumstances should an earlier German attack be provoked. He dismissed all reports about the imminent Operation Barbarossa. He treated Churchill's repeated warnings as a deliberate attempt to mislead him. There would be no invasion of the Soviet Union precisely because the British prime minister said that there would be one. The German attack on June 22, 1941 came as a complete surprise to Stalin and the rest of the Soviet leadership. They rallied only after millions of soldiers, as well as thousands of tanks and airplanes, were lost.

After discussing Moscow in the summer of 1940, Kershaw takes us once more to the inner circle in Washington. There Roosevelt and his subordinates constituted a formidable team. Despite the inevitable mutual jealousies and disagreements on the proper political timetable, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall, and others were keen on stopping Germany and Japan in their tracks—but without risking for Roosevelt the loss of the next presidential elections.

Since Roosevelt decided, in the summer of 1941, to wage an undeclared war against Germany as well as to force Japan economically to disgorge some of its recent territorial conquests, Tokyo took the decision, in the autumn of 1941, to go to war against the United States. This occurred, with what we might now call shock and awe, on December 7. At that point Kershaw's story might have ended, but instead he has added an interesting chapter on how Hitler decided to declare war on the United States, thereby making the war even more global. Incidentally, one of Kershaw's main perplexities is why, in 1941, the Soviet Union and Japan did not declare war on each other. This left two great powers at peace with each other, at least until August 1945 when the Soviets smashed the Kwantung army in Manchuria and Korea, making World War II completely global, if only for a few days.

The book's last chapter is devoted to the Holocaust, which seems to break the thematic unity of the other chapters. Up to now, Kershaw's concern

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has been entirely with strategic decisions. Many might argue that the extermination of five or six million European Jews did not in any way alter diplomatic or military strategy—that it did not affect the course of the war. Remember that the British and the Americans, not to speak of the Soviets, refused to divert aircraft to destroy certain concentration camps or the railroad lines leading to them. But Kershaw argues that the Nazi program for the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question," adopted in the summer and autumn of 1941, was for Hitler a strategic decision. In his view, the war could never be won unless the Jews were destroyed. Attributing defeat in World War I to a Jewish conspiracy, the Führer wished to avoid a repetition of that mistake. Kershaw writes: "The decision to kill the Jews of Europe, though it arose in quite specific circumstances in 1941, followed an inexorable, awful logic." And so, in his view, the Holocaust must be seen as one of the "Ten Decisions That Changed the World" at that time.

One can agree with this view only up to a point. It is true that, as he observes, "the Nazi war on the Jews was a central component of … the Second World War itself—the greatest slaughter the world has ever known." It is also true that the Nazis' unwillingness to make use of German-Jewish talent and patriotism, which had been crucial factors in strengthening the German war effort between 1914 and 1918, seriously weakened Germany between 1939 and 1945. Moreover, the Nazis' willingness to destroy millions of able-bodied Jewish men and women at a time of catastrophic labor shortage in Germany was inspired by Hitler's "strategic" considerations and did have some effect on the conduct of the war. And consider, finally, Adolf Eichmann's ability to divert hundreds of trains for the transportation of Jews to Auschwitz gas chambers, especially in 1944, when the trains were desperately needed at the eastern front. And yet it must be said, on the other hand, that the killing of the Jews did not in any way affect the Allied prosecution of the war, and so in this sense the influence of the Holocaust on Allied or German military strategy was very limited indeed.

In a stimulating "Afterthoughts" chapter, Kershaw reflects on whether these ten decisions could have been avoided, or others been made instead. His answer is that there were barely any alternatives. It is a little surprising, perhaps, in a book that studies the free historical agency of political and military leaders, and casts the individual in such a central role in history, to find this sense of historical inevitability; but it pervades Kershaw's book. In his telling, the British in May 1940 had really no choice but to hold out if they wanted to avoid total humiliation and the end of their empire, not to speak of the end of Western civilization. Unable to mount an invasion of Great Britain, Hitler had hardly any choice but to seek Britain's isolation through an attack on the Soviet Union. Stalin, once he had committed the folly of coming to an agreement with the Nazis, had no choice but to defend himself when attacked by his erstwhile allies. The Japanese were unwilling to surrender their imperial policy achieved through several decades of painful re-armament and modernization; and, finally, the United States could not allow Japan to dominate China as well as to interrupt the balance in the Western Hemisphere. And so events took their inexorable course. This led to victory for the Western democracies, but it led to victory, too, for Stalin's tyrannical empire.

But is Kershaw right in devoting a large book to individual political decision-makers? Today, when professors advise their doctoral candidates to write on great historical trends—on social, psychological, and cross-cultural currents, or on economic underpinnings, social classes, and institutional developments—it is not surprising to find that research projects and pathbreaking studies on diplomatic and political history have become a rarity. Yet Kershaw's book is precisely that: a diplomatic and political history.

Clearly, industrial and economic developments were crucial for wartime decision-making. The United States, Japan, the Soviet Union, and Germany were first-rate industrial powers; Great Britain less so; Italy not at all. And yet in none of these states did the captains of industry dictate strategy to the politicians. Instead they worked for the government—with a handsome profit to themselves, but still under strict state control. Political leaders such as Roosevelt, who understood his country's economic situation, wisely abstained from entering the war before the industry was ready. Stalin attempted to do the same in 1941, but was overruled by the German attack. Hitler was rightly convinced that Germany had only a few years before its enemies would outstrip the country's and even Europe's production figures, and so he was always in a hurry with regard to strategic planning. Yet in 1940, for domestic political reasons, he allowed the war industry to fall grievously behind. In sum, then, it was not economic forces that dictated German policy; it was Hitler who dictated economic developments.

Historians and political thinkers used to attribute enormous significance to the behavior and collective strategies of specific social classes, especially the working class, which was said to hold the power to stop a war or even to turn it against its makers. This dearly held idea proved to be wrong during World War I and again during World War II. No doubt, the discontent of French workers, or rather of trade-union leaders, was partly responsible before the war for sagging production figures in tanks and fighter planes, but that is not why France was defeated in 1940. The French army in that year still had better tanks and more artillery than did the Germans. Similarly, the relative satisfaction of German workers, now free of the threat of unemployment, contributed to the rapid development of the prewar armament industry in that country.

But the war itself proved that European workers were neither more nor less "progressive" than members of other social groups. Their role in the anti-Nazi resistance was less significant than that of intellectuals or of army officers. True, hundreds of French railroad men and hundreds of Belgian miners, most of them communist trade-union members, fought and died in the resistance movement, but other railroad men unhesitatingly served the Germans or the collaborationist governments. (And without the assistance of railroad engineers and stokers, whether in France, Poland, the Netherlands, or Hungary, the Final Solution could not have been implemented.) Mainly, it was a question of money and nationality: Czech workers toiled diligently in the German-run factories throughout the war, because of their good pay and good food rations; Polish workers often engaged in sabotage, because of their low pay and starvation food rations. German workers in uniform served their country well; but Italian workers in uniform were likely to surrender to the enemy in a war that few Italians considered their own.

And what about the role of religion? It is astonishing how limited a role religion and the churches played in World War II, as opposed to the wars of the early modern age or today's conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan. Polish Catholic laymen and priests resisted the Nazis and the Soviets and were victimized by the two in turn, but then Catholicism and Polishness were virtually interchangeable. The German Catholic clergy and the faithful generally supported the war effort, especially when it came to fighting Bolshevism, even though they objected to many aspects of Nazi practices and doctrine. Catholic and Protestant clergymen

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in the rest of Europe might or might not have been in favor of Nazi Germany, depending on their nationality and the local circumstances. During the war, the Soviet leadership employed Eastern Orthodox clergymen to promote Russian and Slavic patriotism. In Yugoslavia, Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs were killing each other in the name of both nationality and religion. Overall, however, one can argue that had no religions and no churches existed in Europe between 1939 and 1945, the war would have been fought practically the same way. The role of religion in the Japanese theater of war was even more doubtful.

The same cannot be said, of course, about the causal influence of nationalism. It was the principal motivation for the German conquest in the East and for collaboration as well as resistance in occupied Europe. Ukrainians, Slovaks, Croats, Albanians, Bosnians, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians expected national salvation from the German occupiers; Czechs, Serbs, Poles, and Russians feared the German presence because the national ambitions of the ethnic minorities and the neighboring nations. Modern studies show that even in such countries as Norway and France, where statehood was not in doubt, the main motivation of the resistance movement was not political ideology but patriotism. In Europe, and to a lesser degree in East Asia, the perceived need for the nation to rid itself of ethnic minorities was why people joined or opposed the German and Japanese war effort. World War II was not only a clash among great powers and a clash of conflicting ideologies, it was also a series of civil wars and ethnic conflicts. The most important and lasting outcome of the war was ethnic cleansing, which forever changed the demography and the ethnic composition of many countries. The five million East European Jews who were killed during the war, and the thirteen million East European Germans who were expelled after the war, did not return to their homeland; nor will their descendants.

In view of all this, we must return to the underlying premise so eloquently propounded by Kershaw: that the major events of World War II were the work of individuals. In August 1939, Hitler and Stalin agreed to smash Poland and to redivide Eastern Europe, yet no more than a handful of assistants had advance knowledge of all this. Without Churchill's eloquence and dynamism, the war against Nazism would have come to an end nearly as soon as it started. Hitler and Hitler alone decided to invade the Soviet Union. Roosevelt and his trusted associates prepared the United States for war. And it was only when the emperor of Japan nodded his head that a mighty Japanese fleet, loaded with attack aircraft, sailed for Hawaii. ◆

Stephen Owen
THE THEATER OF HISTORY

RETURN TO DRAGON MOUNTAIN: MEMORIES OF A LATE MING MAN
By Jonathan D. Spence
(Viking, 352 pp., $24.95)

People of an age of peace, who cannot imagine that the world they enjoy could ever be overthrown, have a particular fascination with accounts of the violent fall of empires and the experiences of those who lived through the ruin of their good lives. If there is some hidden anxiety in the reader's pleasure in such accounts, there is a more overt compulsion on the part of those who write their experiences of such times to repeat the story and return to the past. Jonathan D. Spence's new book is about just such a return, both in writing and in life. The subject of the book—he was born in 1597 and died sometime around 1684—lived his last decades in dire poverty, renting a small cottage on what had once been a huge estate belonging to his family.

Spence, our own best-known historian of pre-modern China, has in his seniority written the biography of Zhang Dai, who was himself a historian. Zhang Dai's life spanned the end of the Ming Dynasty in all its eccentric opulence, the subsequent trauma of the Manchu conquest, and the early decades of the Qing Dynasty, when many intellectuals of the old order tried to understand what had happened to the Ming Dynasty and why. Zhang Dai himself passed through all these phases of pleasure, suffering, and retrospect.

Zhang Dai wanted very much to be a historian. When not engaged in the other entertainments that the immense wealth of his family enabled, he studied. His lifelong ambition was to write the history of the Ming, and he carried the extensive drafts of his history with him as he hid out in the mountains for years while the Manchus were consolidating their rule. The chances of history had provided him an end for his magnum opus. When he started his work, no one could see that the dynasty would fall so abruptly and dramatically in 1644–1645. The conquerors were the Manchus, a non-Chinese people who had founded a small but vigorous state to the northeast and declared a dynasty known as the Qing. Seizing their opportunity, they crossed the Great Wall, took Beijing, and began to move their armies steadily southward.

There were historical precedents for the conquest of North China by non-Chinese peoples; it was regrettable, but it had happened. But to conquer both the north and at the same time the immensely rich cities of the south, with huge Ming armies protecting them, was unprecedented and unthinkable. The male population, forced to shave part of their heads and wear the queue, had a daily reminder of the ethnicity of their rulers. Fortune gave Zhang Dai almost four decades of life after the conquest to put the pieces together and understand how the Ming had gone so wrong as to allow the historically unprecedented.

Zhang Dai was far from the only person of his day who wanted to write the history of the Ming. Among gentlemen of learning it was a common ambition, with a cachet of dignified purpose that gave meaning to idleness. The problem was that none of these aspiring historians had the sources to go beyond known facts, common opinion, and judgments that were, by and large, conventional. The age of the private historian of a dynasty was long past. The resources to write such a history were primarily in archives in the capital, under the watchful eye of a government with its own vested interest in historical accounts. China was too big. The private historian was often successful in direct proportion to the limitation of his scope to the world that he knew best.

Zhang Dai thought of himself as a historian, and Spence too thinks of Zhang Dai primarily as a historian of his dynasty, his home city, and his family. And yet those who still read and study Zhang Dai now, in both China and the West, think of him as primarily a "literary" figure, known for his essays and, above all, for his two famous books of memoirs written during and after the conquest, in which he writes his

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memories of the late Ming world before the conquest. To be sure, the art of the memoirist is clearly allied to the historian's craft; but the memoirist's skill in writing and his personal engagement with the past make him, in modern eyes, less the historian than other clumsier, more analytical writers. The detail becomes so engrossing that, rather than illustrating some part of the whole, it swallows the whole into itself.

One could not imagine a better subject than Zhang Dai for Spence, whose own career as a historian has ventured along the contested frontier between history and literature. By training, position, and basic commitment, Spence is a historian; but his pleasure in writing— both his own and the Chinese sources that he reads— puts him in a situation of resonance with the subject of his book. There is in his work something that distinguishes him from most academic historians. Contemporary academic history is too diverse to admit any single characterization, but it generally prefers the grand argument that marshals facts like the conquering armies of the Qing, subordinating them to a single large purpose determined by the commander. Detail is enlisted only to serve the narrative whole. This is strangely close to Aristotle's characterization of dramatic poetry in the *Poetics*, specifically when dramatic poetry is contrasted with history. In dramatic poetry, the plot determines everything; but history, in Aristotle's view, is plotless. Aristotle's good historian tells "what happened" in the unruly, sometimes disconnected details; Aristotle's dramatist tells how things "should have happened," which is remarkably close to the academic historian's commitment to show why what happened should have happened. In dramatic poetry, individual characters are represented only as a function of the larger necessities of the plot; they are not autonomous agents, but appear, act, and disappear as the plot requires. (If such a slippage of poetry into history or history into poetry seems strange, we might keep in mind that the modern usage of the term "argument" is borrowed from the plot summary that once headed a play, and that those who sought to conquer a dynasty had to "plot" as carefully as a good dramatist.)

The affinity between the plots of Aristotle's playwright, the Manchu high command, and the contemporary academic historian suggest a contrast with an older historiography, in which characters have full agency and the historian looks to those details that reveal characters, both large and small. Individual human agents are concretely described, acting and reacting, sometimes causing and always contending with the accidents and complex contingencies of fortune. Apart from a simple rise-and-fall narrative, the historical whole did not hang together any better than the late Ming polity did. Zhang Dai was, in Spence's terms, "a late Ming man," even though he lived almost half his life under the Qing. The late Ming lacked an effective "plot"; it could not mobilize its vast resources into some integrated plan whose effective implementation would be a narrative of the dynasty's survival. It was politically impotent in the face of Manchu armies, but still victorious in the retrospective imagination as a lost world of engrossing detail.

The interplay between drama and history was no less an issue in Zhang Dai's own time. Seventeenth-century China was a very much a theater culture, and Zhang Dai had an enduring fascination with theater and the theatrical. Indeed, like many wealthy households, he had his own acting troupe, and he wrote a play called *Ice Mountain* about recent political events in the Ming. These Chinese plays were not like Aristotle's drama of plot; they were based on character and on the poetry of the moment, usually within a known plot. Like European theater culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Chinese theater culture of that time provided new ways to think about society and history in terms of roles, plots, and "acting." It may be that "all the world's a stage"— which is both Shakespeare and a literal translation of the seventeenth-century Chinese dramatist Li Yu; but after the Manchu conquest, the beautiful illusion of theater became part of the critique of the failure of the Ming. On the simplest level, the splendors of the late Ming vanished like a theatrical illusion, recalling one of the most famous moments in Zhang Dai's memoirs. Zhang is traveling with his acting troupe and arrives at a temple late one night. On a whim, he stages an impromptu performance of a play, to the amazement of the monks, woken from their sleep. Then Zhang and his troupe move on, leaving the monks wondering what happened.

The more serious critique of theater and history in the Ming period focused on the impotence of theatrical illusion. The figures charged with the defense of the Ming seemed to be only playacting; the grim, effective forces of history, in which things did not work out as the conventional story demanded, erased that world in only a few years. Perhaps the greatest Chinese play of the seventeenth century, *Peach Blossom Fan*, which was written in 1699, tells the story of the fall of the Southern Ming, the one-year regime in Nanjing from 1644–1645, as a staged polity with a theater-loving emperor. As the regime collapses, the would-be emperor flees to one of his generals, telling him: "I don't want to play emperor any more."

Spence tells a story with similar resonance. Zhang Dai was visited by the Prince of Lu, one of the pretenders to the Ming throne, who was trying to gather a resistance army as the Manchus were making their way inexorably southward. To entertain the prince, Zhang Dai staged an act of a play about the founder of the Southern Song, who re-established his dynasty in the south when North China fell to the Jurchens, the ancestors of the Manchus, in the second decade of the twelfth century. The prince was immensely pleased, drank himself into a stupor, and went his way. The theatrical representation of effective action seemed to guarantee effective action in the historical present.

The more direct connection between theatrical representation and historical reality can be seen in the military maneuvers that Zhang Dai describes, in which the Ming forces executed a mock battle with precision and panache, soundly defeating the make-believe enemy. But those same Ming armies crumbled in front of the advancing Manchus. Family members and friends of Zhang Dai,

Little Orchard

How many trees—miniatures at that—
before we call it an orchard. How much
pleasure bobs there, for how many songbirds.
Something so big in the little fruit trees.
Yet one peck and they spoil the juvenile fruit.
And the deer lean their whole earthly weight
to the mesh fencing, scraping the mild
derma of trunks down to the infant bone.
And beetles drink the sap of what's left, even
after it's dry. And fly away, separate,
each to a high separate limb. Crisp leaves.
And the green pears shrivel hard as nuts.
And something strips the sour cherry overnight.
Fruit for the beast. Not a leaf left for love.

DAVID BAKER

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inspired by loyalty to the dynasty and the image of their own heroism, went off to join the resistance armies, failed, and often died. It never seemed to occur to them that they knew nothing of actual military command. The theatricality of late Ming elite culture showed its hollowness in the face of an experienced and professional army.

Zhang Dai wisely went off into the mountains with his manuscript of Ming history; the manuscript now had an ending to be written. The historiography that Zhang Dai knew invited him to understand what happened not as a failure of systems, but as a failure of historical agents. When his historical imagination came closer to home, however, he could never disentangle judgments of individual failure and folly from nostalgia and his personal sense of loss.

Zhang Dai came from the highest echelon of the cultural elite, from a family that had once held office; but before the fall of the dynasty Zhang Dai's generation was largely living off its capital. Zhang Dai was the eldest son of generations of eldest sons, but he did not follow the grueling route of the examinations into office; he was a private scholar and aesthete, dividing his days between study and pleasure.

Zhang Dai was surrounded by an extended family whose stories he eventually recorded. It is a remarkable gallery of the upright, the enterprising, the corrupt, the alcoholic, the disappointed, and, in more recent generations, the eccentric, who paid extravagant sums to gratify their whims. Their "spontaneity," enabled by their fortune and admired in elite culture, could sometimes easily slip into violence, as with his cousin Yanke, who beat one of the maidservants so violently that she committed suicide. Yet Yanke is elsewhere admired for other aspects of this same unbridled impulsiveness.

Zhang Dai's gallery extended beyond his family members to others, some of whom are known from other sources. The immensely popular pock-faced storyteller Liu Jingting later figured in the play *Peach Blossom Fan*. Zhang Dai focused on the much-prized independence of spirit that went with Liu's talent: he would hold only one session of storytelling a day and would stop abruptly, mid-story, at a whisper or a yawn from the audience. Zhang Dai saw this as spontaneity and the triumph of individual nature; but we are more likely to see this as a socially constructed theatricality, behavior that might enhance the prestige of a famous storyteller but would not be acceptable from a worker or a household maid. For those who achieved elite sanction, such theatricality allowed a crossing of class in both directions. Such people became the roles that they played. If there is something that unifies the diversity of Zhang Dai's world, it is the desire for identity through passionate absorption in the particular, always with willful disregard for the social whole that contained and sustained that elite culture. They paid their price.

When we speak of late Ming elite culture, we actually mean the great cities of the Yangzi delta, such as Zhang Dai's native Shaoxing or his beloved Hangzhou. While Zhang was enjoying the family gardens, libraries, art collections, theatrical troupes, and festivals of the city, North China was gradually collapsing in poverty and banditry. The general violence destroyed the very means to sustain even the most successfully violent, and bandit gangs were forced to merge in order to take new territory and defeat even larger armies opposing them. Zhang's family members were drawn into the wars, but even in this the localism of elite culture—centered on self, family, and city—triumphed. When Zhang Dai's ninth uncle was killed fighting rebels, Zhang Dai understood this as caused by an angry spirit in the cycle of vengeance of a family feud.

By 1644, no one could ignore the larger whole: Beijing had fallen to the rebel Li Zicheng, the Ming emperor had committed suicide, and the Manchus had entered the Great Wall and were on their way south. Zhang Dai's impulsive cousin Yanke, acting in character, set off to take command of troops and died, either of illness or wounds. Hiding in the mountains, Zhang Dai wrote his most famous work, the memoirs that constitute *Dream Recollection of Taoan*. When he returned to his native Shaoxing in 1649, the world was changed. His property and that of his family was gone, and he rented a cottage on an estate that had once belonged to the family.

In the preface to *Dream Recollection of Taoan*, Zhang Dai tells us that each pain and deprivation that he experiences is retribution for some pleasure or excess in his past life. His memoirs are an offering to the Buddha in expiation for his sins. Yet it is a very strange penance, lovingly recreating in words the memories of the sensuous world now lost. Rather than transcending those pleasures, he clings to them.

ANTHONY RUSSO

Jonathan Spence's splendid book is in many ways a "translation" of Zhang Dai's historiography—not in the usual sense of translation, but rather recreating in English words the remembered world that Zhang Dai recreated in Chinese words. Spence is careful to add ample contextualization in ways that were not necessary for Zhang Dai; but he effectively absorbs us in the particulars of Zhang Dai's world, while reminding us of the grim forces of political narrative that were closing in upon it. Spence has woven his sources into a richly detailed account, foreign to the contemporary English reader and yet vividly accessible. One who knows Zhang Dai in the Chinese sees familiar anecdotes and descriptions passing by in Spence's prose, which is as finely crafted as Zhang Dai's own.

As in the best traditional Chinese historiography, the analytical element in Spence's account is immanent in the narration and the description, rather than being the explicit plot that commands the detail. *Return to Dragon Mountain* indeed supports the traditional Chinese understanding of the reasons for the failure of the late Ming. Spence's book effectively shows why, for more than two centuries after the Ming fell, Chinese intellectuals blamed late Ming culture for the disaster. Spence is not writing about the fall of the Ming itself; his subject is Zhang Dai and his own retrospective representation of that culture.

It is easy to sympathize with the late Ming elite's cult of fascination with the individual and absorption in the particular, with its contempt for the conventional and its resistance to the totalizing state. The culture's values were the negative image of the Ming state's own egregious failures, most of all its inability to inspire a sense of collective enterprise and to support that enterprise. If the elite were absorbed in passions for their hobbies, they were also subjects of a dynasty one of whose recent emperors had given up all pretense of governing for cabinet-making. If they were given to theatrical absorption, one of their earlier emperors had decided to play the military hero and had created a state crisis by getting captured by the Mongols. Although it was only one of their multi-ethnic imperial roles, the new Qing rulers on the whole represented Han Chinese orthodox values far more effectively than their Ming predecessors. Perhaps the Manchu rulers, too, were only acting; but as with their armies, they were professionals. ◆

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David A. Bell

UTOPIA AND CALCULATION

THE DEMANDS OF LIBERTY: CIVIL SOCIETY IN FRANCE SINCE THE REVOLUTION
By Pierre Rosanvallon
Translated by Arthur Goldhammer
(Harvard University Press, 354 pp., $35)

In the twentieth century, few if any countries did as much as France to change the way history is written. The *Annales* school, named after the brilliant journal of that title, and associated especially with the charismatic Fernand Braudel, led readers around the world to see the past in a new way. The school centered its inquiries on long-term patterns of social and economic change and the experiences of ordinary men and women, rather than on the doings of kings and generals. It advocated a close partnership between history and the social sciences, and developed wonderfully original methods of analyzing long-range series of data. The best *Annalistes* could conjure up the ghosts of the hungry and the downtrodden from the dry bones of grain-price and land-holding records. For once, a movement among historians deserved the compliment "revolutionary."

And like all revolutionary movements, the *Annales* eventually lost focus and energy. The journal itself remains outstanding, but it no longer leads the discipline as it did in Braudel's day. A plethora of approaches, methods, and theories have sprung up that claim "*Annales*-style social history" as a point of origin, but often retain only loose connections to it. In the United States, a "new cultural history" inspired by literary theory and cultural anthropology long ago proclaimed itself the discipline's new cutting edge.

Pierre Rosanvallon, one of the most important writers of history in France today, would certainly seem to owe little to the *Annales*. For one thing, he is a follower of François Furet, the great historian of the French Revolution who died a decade ago. Furet openly repudiated *Annalisme*, practicing what might best be described as philosophical history—an account of the past in which ideas structure historical change. In one of Furet's exemplary works, an imposing history of France from 1770 to 1880, the central figures were neither ordinary men and women nor (for the most part) kings and generals, but political thinkers such as Rousseau, Constant, and Tocqueville. At one point Furet even wrote that "the revolutionary lower classes continued to confuse the grain issue with politics"—as if matters of hunger and survival did not deserve such a lofty label. Rosanvallon does not share this condescending attitude, but he too largely concerns himself with the pronouncements of philosophers, pamphleteers, and the more articulate sort of politicians.

And yet the *Annales* school did lie behind Furet's work, and so behind Rosanvallon's as well. Furet began his career writing *Annales*-style quantitative history, and even after he moved away from it he continued to seek deep structures that shaped the movement of societies across the centuries. Except that where Braudel had seen these structures at work in geology and climate, Furet found them in fundamental political concepts. He believed, for example, that the most important factors shaping modern French history were the pre-revolutionary monarchy's conception of sovereignty as indivisible, and Rousseau's rigid notion of the general will. Together they supposedly fostered an unhealthy dependence on the state and an inability to tolerate dissent and disagreement, which endured long after the revolutionary crisis of the eighteenth century. Hence, for Furet, the inability of the French to establish even a moderately stable democracy until nearly a century after 1789, or ever to develop a strong and autonomous civil society. A onetime communist turned passionate anti-communist, Furet also believed that a bloody line ran from the French revolutionary terror of 1793–1794 all the way to Stalin and the gulag.

At its best, this sort of history writing is dazzling and provocative, suggesting that the distant past holds the key to our present political pathologies. Yet unlike the *Annales* school, this successor movement now represented by Rosanvallon has had relatively little influence outside the circles of those who study France. There are two principal reasons for this. The first is that Furet and Rosanvallon concerned themselves above all with the problem of how democracy can devolve into totalitarianism, and this problem has greater resonance in France than elsewhere. American and British democracies, despite their multiple weaknesses, never fell prey to totalitarianism. Nor did the pathologies of democratic rule figure decisively, if at all, in the origins of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. But in France, even after more than two centuries, the jagged scar of the Terror remains raw and painful. Why were the grand hopes of 1789 so quickly followed by civil war, the guillotine, and a dictatorial regime that seemed to prefigure the worst that modernity has to offer? And why did the shadow of these events fall so heavily over so much of the country's subsequent history?

The second reason is that Furet never really created a historical "school," even in France. He did not found a journal or any large-scale institution (unlike Braudel, who established France's main research center in the social sciences). Furet's students have mostly written conventional political and intellectual history, while the intellectuals who gathered around him mostly worked in the area of political and social theory. (Several of them have also written important historical essays, and some of their best work has appeared in translation, in the series "New French Thought" edited by Mark Lilla and Thomas Pavel for Princeton University Press.) Of all the members of what used to be called the "Furet Galaxy," Pierre Rosanvallon is virtually alone in having written a significant and wide-ranging body of work that pursues Furet's questions with something like Furet's methods, and on the scale that Furet pioneered. Since Furet's death, it is Rosanvallon who has come closest to fulfilling his historical project. But the project remains, in some fundamental ways, a problematic one. Above all, Rosanvallon, like Furet before him, tends to exaggerate the historical importance of both tyranny and proto-totalitarianism in France. Arguably, the country has suffered far more from the evils of civil war, and the distinct form of oppression that Tocqueville dubbed "soft despotism."

On the surface, Rosanvallon would seem an unlikely candidate for the role of Furet's heir. Whereas Furet was brilliantly eclectic, publishing on everything from the eighteenth-century book trade to Soviet communism, Rosanvallon has been doggedly steady, producing one tome after another on the travails of French democracy and civil society. And Furet's formative political experience came in his break with communism in the 1950s, while Rosanvallon's outlook followed

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from the student rebellion of 1968 (he was twenty at the time) and a subsequent stint in the so-called "second left" associated with the maverick socialist Michel Rocard. Indeed, while Furet flirted with Anglo-American classical liberalism in the 1970s, Rosanvallon was working as a house ideologue for the moderate left trade federation, the CFDT, and exploring the possibilities of *autogestion*, or workers' self-management (a popular "third way" idea that, in its time, sent many a well-intentioned Western leftist on a political pilgrimage to its then-champions in Belgrade).

Yet Rosanvallon, like the "*nouveaux philosophes*" Bernard Henri-Lévy and André Glucksmann, and unlike so many others on the French left, recognized totalitarianism as the great modern political evil. This led him to Furet's remarkable circle of anti-communist intellectuals, which included the theorist of democracy and totalitarianism Claude Lefort, the left-libertarian Cornelius Castoriadis, and future stars of the "Furet Galaxy" such as Pierre Manent and Marcel Gauchet. Rosanvallon was captivated, especially by Furet and Lefort, and after Rocard lost out to François Mitterrand for leadership of the French socialist movement, he turned from militancy toward the life of a historian-intellectual.

Rosanvallon has by now produced a genuinely impressive body of work, including a book on the crisis of the modern welfare state, an extraordinary study of French liberals in the early nineteenth century, and above all a hefty three-volume study of modern French politics that appeared in the 1990s. For a long time, this work attracted little attention in the United States, but in 2004 the historians Samuel Moyn and Andrew Jainchill published a lucid overview, and last year Moyn brought out a collection of Rosanvallon's essays under the title *Democracy Past and Future. The Demands of Liberty*, which appeared in France three years ago, is the first of Rosanvallon's books to be published in English.

Opening *The Demands of Liberty*, it is easy to see why. For a writer who discusses the French penchant for abstraction at length, Rosanvallon remains apparently oblivious to the way this same inclination can sometimes deaden his prose. Reading him successfully depends on mastering a long series of abstract formulations that make little sense on first glance: "generality as social form"; "generality as democratic quality"; "immediate democracy"; "polarized democracy"; "the network state." Nor does he explain them as clearly as he might. "Immediate democracy," he writes in a typical turn of phrase, "rejects all *reflexivity* of the social, by which I mean that it rejects the assumption that the expression of the social requires a reflective agent to structure or focus intervention." What he means, I think, is that in certain forms of democracy (especially the one advocated by French revolutionary radicals) it is considered illegitimate to have any single agent or institution express the opinions of society as a whole. Society should speak with a single, unanimous, unmediated voice. Thankfully, Arthur Goldhammer has done his best (which is a great deal) to put Rosanvallon's thinking into lucid and readable English, and he deserves no blame for the head-scratching and occasional tooth-gnashing that will accompany any serious perusal of this book.

In an effort to broaden the book's appeal, Harvard University Press inadvertently worsened the problem by changing the title. The original French title translates properly not as *The Demands of Liberty*, but as *The French Political Model: Society Versus Jacobinism from 1789 to the Present*, which provides a much more precise description of what Rosanvallon wanted to accomplish. The book in fact has as its subject the modern struggle between "Jacobin" attempts to subject French civil society to centralized political control and opposing attempts to carve out an autonomous space for independent social activities. By "Jacobin," Rosanvallon refers not only to the members of the radical Jacobin "club" whose members dominated the radical phase of the French Revolution, but also to the broader revolutionary vision of "regenerating" France, which dominated French Republican thinking long after the Revolution itself.

Above all, Rosanvallon focuses on the question of "intermediary bodies" that emerge from and represent civil society—guilds, trade unions, religious confraternities, professional organizations, and the like. Soon after 1789, the new revolutionary National Assembly outlawed all such associations so as to keep minority groups from imposing their own particular interests on public affairs. "There is no longer any corporation within the state," wrote Isaac-René Guy Le Chapelier, the sponsor of the law. "Henceforth, there is only the particular interest of each individual and the general interest." In 1810, Napoleon's Penal Code formally banned all unauthorized meetings of more than twenty people. It took until late in the nineteenth century for France's Third Republic finally to legalize trade unions, and not until 1901 did the French gain full freedom of association.

This is familiar territory for Rosanvallon, who wrote extensively on the problems of civil society and intermediary bodies in his trilogy in the 1990s. In these books, he followed Furet in presenting Jacobin hostility to civil society as a key modern pathology that opened the door to totalitarianism. Left unchecked, he suggested, the Jacobin urge to regulate, to control, and to make universal would crush not only intermediary bodies, but individuals as well. Only a strong civil society could save ordinary people from the looming power of the state. These insights drew heavily on the work of Tocqueville, whose *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* cast an all-devouring, ever-centralizing state as the dark protagonist of French history, and despaired of the French ever overcoming it. (Rosanvallon and Furet have also repeated Tocqueville's mistake of equating "Jacobinism" with centralization, when the actual Jacobins saw the concentration of power in Paris mostly as an emergency measure, never tried to systematize it, and hoped eventually to diffuse authority throughout French society.)

In one crucial sense, Rosanvallon did depart from Furet's interpretation. For Furet, if the roots of the Jacobin aberration lay in the legacy of the Old Regime monarchy and Rousseauian philosophy, its antidote could be found, in large part, across the Atlantic. Furet never fell prey to the reflexive anti-Americanism of so many French intellectuals, and he nurtured a deep affection for the United States. France, he argued at various times, needed a strong dose of Anglo-American-style liberalism to free itself from the suffocating weight of the Jacobin past, and he gave pride of place in his work to a canon of thinkers whom he saw as having tried, without great success, to implant varieties of it in French soil: Constant, Germaine de Staël, François Guizot, Tocqueville. In the 1980s, a "neo-liberal" political current inspired by this work had brief political importance (above all during the premiership of Jacques Chirac).

Rosanvallon, by contrast, has long presented classical liberalism as the Scylla to Jacobinism's Charybdis—"an equally dangerous extreme." He has argued that by seeking to develop a self-organizing, self-regulating society wholly independent of the state, classical liberals were actually promoting a vision of a world free from politics—and therefore a world

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where ordinary people had no recourse to political action. Such a world ultimately left individuals unprotected from society in much the way that totalitarianism left them unprotected from the state, and therefore it had a totalitarian quality of its own. This insistence on the possibility of political action owed more than a little to the teachings of Claude Lefort, as well as to Rosanvallon's own experience of grassroots political activism in the 1970s, and the ideal of *autogestion*. Still, Rosanvallon remained loyal to Furet in presenting modern France as suffering from an essentially Jacobin pathology—a sort of "French exception" to the democratic rule.

It is on this point that *The Demands of Liberty*, even while summing up much of Rosanvallon's earlier work, departs most strikingly from it. He states the point quite clearly: "There is nothing exceptional about the French model. It is not an outlier among liberal democracies. Indeed, it is fully implicated in the antimonies that define the structure of modernity." To explain these "antimonies," he goes back to Hegel's insight that modern times have left individuals free to develop and express their private, particular, subjective natures, leaving them with only formal, "external" features in common, such as the title of citizen. This change, in turn, often leads to the desire to establish more substantial commonalities through possibly coercive political action. Modern political societies therefore fall between the poles of allowing the greatest possible latitude to private, particular interests (the English model, for Hegel), and constraining these interests as much as possible in the name of the greater good (the French model). But Rosanvallon moves further by arguing, against Furet, that French civil society has in fact managed to assert itself successfully against Jacobinism since Hegel's time, notably in securing the passage of the 1901 legislation on associations. For this reason, the French experience does not illuminate a uniquely French pathology, or even a pathology at all. Rather, it illuminates the modern democratic condition.

Rosanvallon backs up his claims with some striking material. In the first part of his book, he carefully delineates what he calls the Jacobin "political culture of generality": one that refuses to allow the legitimate expression of private, particular interests and tries to force citizens into abstract, a priori categories. He quotes abundantly from figures of the revolutionary era to show just how far this political culture could be pushed—for example, Saint-Just's delirious proposal that all men above age twenty-one be required to give the authorities a yearly list of their friends, or the abbé Raynal's shocking image of the absolute supremacy of the general will expressed in law: "The law is a sword that must impartially cut off anything that would raise itself up above it." He then traces the early nineteenth-century perception that the Revolution had destroyed French civil society, highlighting the lamentations of figures such as Chateaubriand ("the great and universal malady of a world in dissolution"), Balzac ("the nation . . . is held together now by nothing more than the ignoble bonds of material interest"), and Royer-Collard ("only in the books of the philosophers had anyone ever seen a nation decomposed in this manner and reduced to the least of its elements").

Rosanvallon concludes by showing how later French thinkers eventually managed to justify intermediary bodies in a way that did not involve reactionary notions of society as an organic, naturally hierarchical body. He gives particular credit to early French sociologists (especially Durkheim), who demonstrated just how greatly modern society differed from the abstract, mechanistic, or organic visions promoted by Rousseau and Le Chapelier, as well as by their conservative critics. Given society's complexities, these scholars argued, private associations of some sort are a necessity, not an option, and can even function as auxiliaries of the state in some contexts. Following this discovery, Jacobinism could redefine itself to tolerate intermediary bodies, and the French state itself could turn increasingly corporatist, as it would do throughout much of the twentieth century.

It amounts to a powerful tale of political evolution. Despite Rosanvallon's often cloudy prose, his ideas have a clarity and a power similar to Furet's. His work does not have the Gulag-shadowed darkness of Furet's, but political progressives will like it all the more for this quality. Furet condemned political utopias as dangerous illusions, whereas Rosanvallon once spoke of the "immense work" needed "to keep our ambition to transform society from being expunged along with our illusions." In *The Demands of Liberty*, he writes that "possibilities sometimes arise when one side's utopia coincides with the other side's calculation." It is a fine creed for liberals. Interestingly, in the decade since Furet's death Rosanvallon has positioned himself clearly to the left of the decomposing "Furet Galaxy," and in 2002 he even sponsored the publication of a pamphlet that attacked its more right-wing members as "new reactionaries."

And yet Rosanvallon's book is not entirely convincing. For, despite what Rosanvallon has come to believe, there *is* a "French exception," and *The Demands of Liberty* itself gives striking, if unwitting, proof of it. Rosanvallon is quite correct that the "exception" is not Jacobinism, if we see Jacobinism as some sort of proto-totalitarianism. But should we really characterize Jacobinism—and, more broadly, French Republican politics—in this way? Change the definition, and things look rather different.

The important point about the original Jacobins, which Rosanvallon never really recognizes, is that they undertook nearly all their most repressive and terroristic measures in the context of a savage fight for power among themselves, and between them and other revolutionary factions. (Furet's student Patrice Gueniffey has argued this case very convincingly in a recent study of the Terror.) They never sought, and they never had the chance, to make these measures permanent, and they never achieved the sort of absolute control over society of which their more delusionary leaders dreamed. While the revolutionary authorities shed horrifying amounts of blood in rebellious provinces, the systematic application of "terror" in areas unaffected by civil war lasted less than a year, and when the Jacobins fell, in the summer of 1794, their repressive legislation was for the most part immediately repealed.

Tellingly, what survived of the original Jacobinism was less the tyranny than what might be called the pedagogy: the doctrines that envisioned the French people as children to be tutored in proper behavior (including grandiose plans for public education, reforming the French language, establishing new patriotic rituals, and so on). This attitude, as Furet might have observed, owed a great deal both to the Old Regime and to Rousseau—in the first case to the idea of the king as "father of his people," and in the second case to the philosopher's haunting image of an all-powerful Legislator handing down the law to the people in the manner of Moses. The same sort of paternalistic Jacobinism remained powerful under Napoleon, who was a tyrant of a surprisingly unbloodthirsty sort when it came to France itself. (The conquest of foreigners was another matter entirely.) Not surprisingly, Tocqueville, the keenest observer of modern French politics, was fascinated by the phenomenon of what he called "soft

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despotism," and by the notion of the state as the people's *tuteur*—a word that in French means both "tutor" and "guardian." Tocqueville's contemporary Charles de Montalembert put it most strikingly in 1849, in a passage quoted by Rosanvallon himself: "As soon as any party, without exception, achieves control of the government, it treats France not as a victim or a conquest but quite deliberately as a pupil. It sets itself up as the country's teacher.... It makes this great country its ward and awards itself the right to teach it what it ought to want, know and do."

Rosanvallon cites the passage as evidence that the French of the time lacked confidence in civil society, and he is right. But the passage also prompts the idea that the most important peril in modern French politics has been neither the tyranny feared by ancient-minded thinkers nor the totalitarianism that has terrified modern-minded ones. Consider that throughout nearly all of modern French history, instances of real, bloody tyranny have been surprisingly brief, tending to accompany struggles for power rather than the systematic exercise of power: the original Terror (and the subsequent White Terror); the brief civil conflicts of 1830 and 1848–1851; the bloody episode of the Commune in 1870–1871; and finally Vichy (where one side of course had the support of the Nazi occupiers). But once securely in power, French rulers, including the two Napoleons, have tended towards a rule more tutelary than tyrannical. This quality, more than the struggle between "Jacobinism" and "civil society," is arguably the essence of the "French model." And it is, arguably, exceptional.

Of course, accusations of tyranny echo loudly through all of French history, against every regime that has ever held power in the country. But Rosanvallon is a little too quick to limit his discussion to such polemics, without pausing to ask about the social realities that they sometimes conceal. He does note that despite the penal code of 1810, a vigorous civil society in fact existed throughout the nineteenth century, to the extent that in 1900 one agency officially counted no fewer than 45,148 associations in France. And in practice, the state tolerated such associations long before the legislation of 1901. As the future premier Adolphe Thiers instructed local officials in 1834, "You will ignore their existence if they conduct themselves in a manner worthy of being ignored." This is evidence not only for the existence of civil society, but also for the tutelary character of the French state—a state that actually cares less about intermediary bodies as such than about whether these bodies show the right attitude and have learned the right lessons.

Rosanvallon also fails to note the comic peculiarity, from a non-French point of view, of a state agency that bothers to count 45,148 associations in the first place, or of politicians and intellectuals who debate whether and how to foster the development of civil society through state action. Doesn't civil society simply exist, independent of such action? Isn't it an ominous contradiction in terms to think that the state can create it? Tyrants and totalitarians do not think in terms of "creating" civil society, and neither do classical liberals. It is adherents of the French tutelary state who think and speak in these terms. And Rosanvallon, for all his efforts to gaze impartially on his national history, remains one of them.

Late in his book, Rosanvallon remarks that "despite the major changes described above, it is striking to find that the French still look upon their institutions with the same critical eye that has informed their thinking for the past two centuries.... It is as if they suffered from a permanent affliction, a need to exaggerate their woes by turning them into fantasies." This is quite true. But I would argue, against Rosanvallon, that this "affliction" actually extends straight back to the origins of modern French politics in the eighteenth century. Political ideas and doctrines imported from elsewhere—"tyranny," "liberalism," "totalitarianism"—have rarely fit the French case very well, even if they do not always deserve the label of fantasy. To the extent that they have structured French politics over the past two centuries, they have structured it in large part as a battle of mirages. Rosanvallon's work exposes this fact to some extent, but he still remains at least partly in thrall to the mirages himself.

And is the tutelary state really so exceptionally French? On reflection, perhaps not. Certain aspects of it will strike a chord with citizens of nearly all modern democracies. I would suggest that if the "French model" is to illuminate the larger story of modern democracy, it is this aspect, rather than the dialectic of Jacobinism and civil society, that may offer the most useful key. And by focusing on the French case in this way, the very French brand of philosophical history practiced by Pierre Rosanvallon, which has already proven so thought-provoking, may offer new and unexpected rewards. ◆

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Arusha Diarist

African Queen

"We are going to East Africa," my husband told me. That would be him, his Nikon, and me. "A safari has been a lifelong dream." You can't very well say, after such an announcement, that you'd prefer Paris. To cut to the chase, I am famously not an outdoor girl. I am not an animal person. To me, what one sees on the Serengeti are handbags and coats walking around. My great white hunter tried to warm me up by saying that one of the lodges we'd be staying at was the legendary "Treetops." If tree houses had stars, this would be a five-star … tree house. This lodging was known to me because my parents had stayed there. It is also where then-Princess Elizabeth acceded to the British throne upon learning of the death of her father, King George VI. The brochure mentioned sherry on your nightstand and roses in your tub. I tried to think of it as The Four Seasons—if they had situated one in a zoo.

Well, my darling's desire was to see big game. Alternative suggestions of visiting my furrier or perhaps a lion preserve in Florida swayed him not at all, and there was nothing to do but put together the African Queen wardrobe. Everything was khaki or camouflage print. I am guessing the camouflage was to trick the animals into thinking I was foliage riding in a Jeep. I also rustled up a suit of mosquito netting to go over my clothes. With my camouflage Tilley hat and its veil of mosquito netting, I could have passed for a beekeeper at any hive in the hemisphere. And I threw in two tiny battery-operated fans. (I am not crazy about heat, either.) Our touring company's brochure advised safari-goers not to shriek if a lion jumped on the hood of the vehicle and to wear no bright colors. (I had a moment's concern about my hair.) More caveats: Wear no attention-getting jewelry. Permissible were a plain gold wedding band and a cheap watch, which I went right out and bought.

Before you could say, "Only twenty-three days of taking anti-malarials," we were safari-bound. After a stop in Amsterdam, we flew to Kilimanjaro on a KLM plane called *Maria Callas* (do not ask me why). Once in Tanzania, we connected with our guide and driver, Hashim; the other couple we would be traveling with; and our wheels away from home, a Land Rover. The roads, we'd been warned, were "difficult." This description was clearly a euphemism for rutted, rocky, jarring, and dusty. The greatly anticipated Treetops, however, did not disappoint, save for the fact that the one I had been thinking of was in Kenya. The wrong Treetops, in Arusha, Tanzania, was nonetheless splendid, with a Masai staff, some in warrior costume. It was there that our first night's sleep was interrupted by a screeching bush baby (a kind of squirrel with lung power); then, a few hours later, by a bird that sounded like my alarm clock; and, at dawn, by the smell of smoke. Ah yes … smoke … a reassuring scent if you're living in a wooden, thatched-roof tree house on stilts with a circular staircase of maybe 30 steps down to the ground. Then we remembered: Each accommodation has its wood-powered stove stoked to heat the water. Background music for daytime was a bird that sounded like a car alarm. Oh, and did I mention there were earthquakes the first several days of our trip? Or "tremors," as the lodge managers preferred to call them. And one erupting volcano, mercifully seen from an airplane.

Our accommodation at Treetops was roughly a quarter-mile from the main lodge with its restaurant, living room, and bar. The manager told us that after dinner, in the dark, we must be escorted back, lest we wander off the path and meet a wild animal. He mentioned that this rule had been disobeyed at some neighboring lodges and a few tourists had been "lost." At the Ngorongoro Crater Lodge, we shared the grounds with zebras and Cape buffalo who were roaming around looking for food and water. There are no fences allowed because all the "camps" are on conservation land. The English management trainee suggested we think of the Cape buffalo as "retirees": worn-out old gentlemen who had nothing to do but roam around and graze.

The animal parks confirmed to me that paparazzi are everywhere. In this case, about 15 Jeeps and Rovers were parked in a long line, stopped to watch a regal lion. When the vehicle in the lead spots a giraffe/elephant/waterbuck/zebra/wildebeest/monkey/lion/leopard/mongoose/baboon, the caravan stops and shutters click as if Lindsay Lohan had just stepped out from behind a tree. Because the safari circuit through the animal preserves is quite standard, there is seldom only one Jeep, and I began to think of all the occupants as "The Jeep people." Tidbits I picked up from the Jeep people: A nine-year-old male elephant is expelled from the family "when he starts jumping on his sister," as Hashim put it. Taking a "washroom break" behind your vehicle is known as "a loo with a view." It dawned on me that, truth be told, all these animals are either plain, spotted, or striped. Not to put too fine a point on it, their colors and markings are nothing special. It was then I became a disciple of the Ronald Reagan School of Nature: You've seen one baobab tree, you've seen 'em all.

While I was fascinated by the termite mounds everywhere and enthralled by the amazing iridescent colors of the birds we saw, the high point of the trip was cosmetic. On top of various gastrointestinal afflictions and a mysterious infection, I developed a painful rash on my hand. None of the treatments available in the hotel pharmacy worked. When the female half of the couple traveling with us—a former Rockette, no less—overheard me complaining about it, she took action: During a trip to the Tarangire National Park, she broke off a spike of a yucca plant and drizzled the sticky, iodine-colored sap on what I called my leprosy. She said it was pure aloe. The next day, the skin showed improvement, so I spent the rest of the trip looking for yucca plants, breaking off pieces, and feeling very Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman. I was a proper Jeep person at last.

Margo Howard

Margo Howard writes a nationally syndicated advice column, "Dear Margo," which is online at Yahoo! News.

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Purple Voters in the Golden State

California's Republican Party drifted off the centrist track, but its voters didn't.

To a younger generation of political observers, California is the quintessential blue state. It's Hollywood and San Francisco, medicinal marijuana and gay marriage, self-esteem, tree-sitters—a long list of liberal symbols that raise the ire of conservative commentators. But a longer view shows that the Democratic turn in California is a relatively new, and tentative, chapter.

Until recently, Republicans were competitive in the Golden State. Moreover, Democratic registration has been stalled since 1994, whereas independents have proliferated. For most of the last half of the twentieth century, California was, if not a red state, at least reddish-purple (the legislature is another story). Why, then, are Republicans in a slump? Because they abandoned a pragmatic, broad-based identity for ideology and a narrow base. It worked elsewhere, but in California the road to electoral success favors candidates who are not just economically conservative but socially tolerant.

—Morris P. Fiorina and Samuel J. Abrams

Stalin behind Closed Doors: The Lost Kremlin Stenograms

Transcripts of crucial Soviet power struggles come to light after 70 years.

A treasure has been found in formerly top-secret Soviet archives: transcripts of discussions by the USSR's ruling body as it struggled over the young country's future. The dialogues—a thousand pages long and peppered with crude jokes, jeers, and threats—came to light only four years ago. They offer a vivid new window into the Great Terror and the Stalin-Trotsky showdown.

"You always have the last word," Trotsky charges in one clash. Stalin retorts, "You are lying because you are a pitiful coward who fears the truth." Stalin indeed gets the last word—at the end of the 15 years chronicled by the transcripts, his power is total. He can even concede that liquidating 40,000 of the communist elite might have been a mistake—but at least they were easy to replace. Hoover Institution researchers, continuing their work of collecting significant Soviet state and party documents, will publish the Politburo dialogues in November. Scholars will be poring over them for years.

—Paul R. Gregory

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